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500,000 Evacuated

A swollen creek swept a villager away as Typhoon Aere crashed into mainland China, unleashing torrential rains and prompting the evacuation of a half-million people.

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Deadly Crashes

Russian investigators labored to determine whether terrorism caused the near-simultaneous crashes of two jetliners, killing all 89 people aboard.

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Retailers warned vs price gouging

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Some retailers have reportedly increased the prices of their commodities, prompting the Attorney General's Office to warn these businesses that they face possible legal action.

Elements of the Attorney General's Investigative Unit have been going out since Tuesday to check on the retail prices of certain commodities, such as water, batteries, flashlight, candles, rice, matches, film, and chicken.

While no price adjustment has been noted so far on these items on Saipan, CNMI consumer counsel Brian Caldwell said at least one hardware store on Tinian has raised the price of tin, which is used for roofing houses.

New storm developing

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

With the islands still reeling from the devastation caused by Supertyphoon Chaba, the Mariana Islands are now bracing for possible storm conditions this weekend.

The National Weather Service re-

"The AGO has begun serving retailers on the islands with Cease & Desist Notices, placing retailers on notice of the unfair practice of raising their prices based upon the devastating effects

ported that a tropical disturbance has been developing east of the islands since yesterday, predicting that it would become a tropical depression within 24 hours.

The NWS advised residents to closely monitor the developing weather disturbance, which might reach the islands by Sunday. The NWS said tropical storm conditions might pos-

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of Typhoon Chaba," the AGO said in a media release.

The AGO advised these retailers to urgently roll back prices to pre-typhoon levels.

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS UPDATE

Education Commissioner Rita H. Inos and Saipan Southern High School principal Peter Le'au said that Saipan Southern High School is now fit for reopening and classes will resume today, August 27th.

To date the following schools are opened:

- Tinian Jr. Sr. High School, which reopened on Aug. 25; and
- Gregorio T. Camacho Elementary School, which reopened Aug.

The remaining schools on all three islands are expected to open Monday, Aug. 30, providing that CUC restores power and water. PSS staff and teachers are encouraged to contact their schools directly. Parents and students are encouraged to contact the schools or the Commissioner's Office at 664-3700 and 664-3770 or the Board of Education Office at 664-3727 for updated information on the remaining schools.

CUC: 92 percent of Saipan is energized

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. reported that power and water supply on Saipan is almost back to normal, but many residents remain in the dark and are waiting for water to come out of their faucet.

A status report from the CUC power division showed that power has been restored in 92 percent of the island as of yesterday morning. At least 172 houses, however, still has no power.

Meanwhile, 34 wells, booster pumps, and water facilities remained inoperable as of Wednesday afternoon, based on the latest available data from the CUC water division. A total of 17 wells—eight of which are located in Kagman—have not been energized due to lack of power. Nine of the water facilities were reported inactive, while the other wells require repair and maintenance.

"We're close to completing the restoration work. We expect that everything

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US prepares for possible flu outbreak

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States may have to close schools, restrict travel and ration scarce medications if a powerful new flu strain spurs a worldwide outbreak, according to federal plans for the next pandemic, obtained Wednesday by *The Associated Press*.

It will take months to brew a vaccine that works against the kind of super-flu that causes a pandemic, although government preparations include research to speed that production.

The federal plans have been long-

awaited by flu specialists, who say it's only a matter of time before the next pandemic strikes and the nation is woefully unprepared.

There have been three flu pandemics in the last century, the worst in 1918, when more than half a million Americans and 20 million people worldwide died.

Concern is rising that the next pandemic could be triggered by the recurring bird flu in Asia, if it mutates in a way that lets it spread easily among people.

See US on Page 12



TIN CAN LADY

American Red Cross volunteer Tayna Camacho prepares the tin cans that will be used for a fundraising activity that the group will conduct at the Microl intersection in San Jose and Shell intersection in Dandan between 4pm and 6pm, today and next Friday. The money will go toward the victims of Supertyphoon Chaba.

AGNES DONATO

Local

diabetes
+GREEN

Island Snapshots

The Saipan Tribune accepts contributed pictures of birthdays, weddings, baptisms, and other community and family events for free publication. Material submitted should be original and not copyrighted, in digital or print format. Must include a caption containing complete details (a description of the event, identities of the persons in the picture, the date, and the place), the name of the contributor, and a contact number. The Saipan Tribune reserves the right to edit the caption, the date of publication and the size of the picture. Contributors can e-mail their submissions to editor.tribune@gtepacific.net. To check if contributions are received, call 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747.

CIS, UN unsatisfied with NMI asylum regs

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees remain unsatisfied with the CNMI's proposed regulations on refugee protection, and have asked the Attorney General's Office anew to delay the adoption of the rules.

The CNMI's policy on refugee protection was set to be published for adoption in the latest issue of the Commonwealth Register, which came out yesterday.

But assistant attorney general Eric S. O'Malley said the AGO received another request last week from the U.S. Immigration and the United Nations, asking the AGO to delay the publication pending the resolution of outstanding issues concerning the proposed regulations.

He refused to elaborate on what the outstanding issues are.



Brown

to adopt the regulations on the next Commonwealth Register, set to be published on Sept. 24.

O'Malley said the extension on the comment period will allow the AGO to organize the logistics of implementing the regulations.

Assistant attorney generals Arin Greenwood and Dana Emery, who have recently completed training on refugee protection proceedings in the U.S. mainland, will not be returning until early September.

Both lawyers were trained to make decisions on whether or not an alien who has been ordered deported qualifies for refugee protection.

The original proposed regulations were published in the Commonwealth Register's May 24 issue. A revised version was printed in June to include recommendations made by the U.S. Immigration Services and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The scheduled adoption of the regulations in July was again delayed, upon the request of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

With another request for an extension of the comment period, the regulations cannot be adopted until Sept. 24.

The regulations on persons seeking refugee protection aim to implement Public Law 13-61,

which requires the Office of the Attorney General to promulgate rules and regulations enforcing the U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the U.N. Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The United States is a signatory to both international conventions and treaties. Pursuant to Section 102 of the Covenant, the CNMI is required to conform to such forms of treaties.

camacho

cb cruz

cars unlimited

Insurance checkpoints next week

Motorist traveling on CNMI roads without mandatory insurance, beware!

The Department of Public Safety's Traffic Section and Bureau of Motor Vehicle will be conducting roadblocks Friday next week, Sept. 3, to check on motorists if their vehicles have mandatory insurance.

The first setup will be on Beach Road, Susupe in front on the Multi-Purpose Center. It will be in operation at about 9am and will be terminated at about 10:15am.

The second set up will be on Beach Road, Susupe in front of the Minatchom At-

dao. Operation will start at approximately 4pm and will end at about 5:15pm.

The checkpoints will be terminated if it begins to rain.

This operation is in accordance with Public Law 11-55, the Mandatory Liability Auto Insurance Act, which mandates that all vehicles traveling on the roads of the CNMI must be insured. The checkpoints serve to educate the community about the law, and enforces the Act.

Violators will be fined up to \$500.

For more information, contact Rose T. Ada-Hocog at 664-9084/5.

hardt

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hardt eye

daisy

cars unltd.

PSS' Barcina's called to serve in Iraq

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Dandan Elementary School principal Jonas Barcina's is being called to join other CNMI reservists in an intensive training for deployment to Iraq next year.

Barcina's, an inactive Army Reserve, said he received the call for his deployment only last weekend. Today, he was informed that he would have to leave this Sunday.

"I'm told that my ticket would be ready by Sunday. Yes, I am willing to go. But really it came as a surprise to me. To be honest, I didn't think I would be called in because everybody is gone. Besides, I'm in a different category of 'inactive' personnel," he said in an interview at his school yesterday.

He said he felt so overwhelmed that he called the Hawaii Army Reserve to verify whether they got the right person.

"I'm told that it's really me. So it's fine. I have no objection," he said. "But you know, it's just so overwhelming because I'm leaving a post I've loved over the years. There are so many things that I need to put in order first here in school as well as personal matters."

In view of this, he said he would be asking for a delay of about two weeks in his departure. He has asked the help of CNMI leaders like some lawmakers to petition for the delayed departure.

"As a principal, there's just a massive responsibility I must take care of before leaving, such as the accreditation work," he said.

Barcina's said school damage

assessment and rehabilitation work is another pressing concern facing the school.

"I am hopeful that my situation would be looked at and my request for departure delay is favorably acted on," he said.

Besides school responsibilities, Barcina's said he needs to attend to his personal financial obligations. "I have loans, big loans that must be taken cared of before I leave, otherwise I'd be penalized," he said.

He said he has informed Education Commissioner Rita H. Inos and other Public School System officials about his deployment order.

"They understand my situation and they're ready to help," he said.

He said the commissioner has yet to decide on who will replace



LIBERTY DONES

Dandan Elementary School principal Jonas Barcina's, rightmost, poses with his teachers and staff.

him as principal in Dandan.

Barcina's said that he has recommended one of his staff, Martha Kintol, as his successor. "It's all up to the commissioner but I highly recommended her [Kintol]," he said, adding that Kintol is about to finish her master's degree.

"I've interviewed her for vice principal position. I've sensed the qualities of a leader in her," he said.

Meantime, Barcina's said

he would certainly miss his school, friends, and relatives for the entire 18 months assignment overseas. "It's a mixed emotion," he said.

He said some of his immediate family members like his mom, Francisca, on Rota do not know yet about his deployment.

"I haven't spoken with my mom yet. My sister cried when I told her," he said.

Barcina's said that he is classified as IRR or individual ready

reserve, which is different from the other Army Reserve members who left the CNMI last week.

"They are considered 'active' reserve. I'm not. That's why I was surprised when they called me suddenly. I'm left behind [by the CNMI unit]," he said.

Barcina's said, though, that he would be joining the CNMI unit in Hawaii and Louisiana for a six-month training prior to the one-year deployment in Iraq in February next year.

Babauta explains self to Verizon employees

Gov. Juan N. Babauta disclosed yesterday that he sent letters to all Verizon employees to explain his position on the proposed sale of the telecommunications

facility from Micronesian Telecommunications Corp.

Babauta said he wants the employees to know why he has opposed the proposed acquisition

of Verizon by prospective buyer Pacific Telecom Inc.

A copy of the letter was unavailable as of press time. During a press briefing, however, Babauta justified why he had sought the imposition of a \$10-million performance bond on PTI should the Commonwealth Telecommunications Commission approve MTC and PTI's application for the approval of the deal.

Babauta said PTI would not want to disclose its financial statement. The CTC had earlier rejected Babauta's bond proposal.

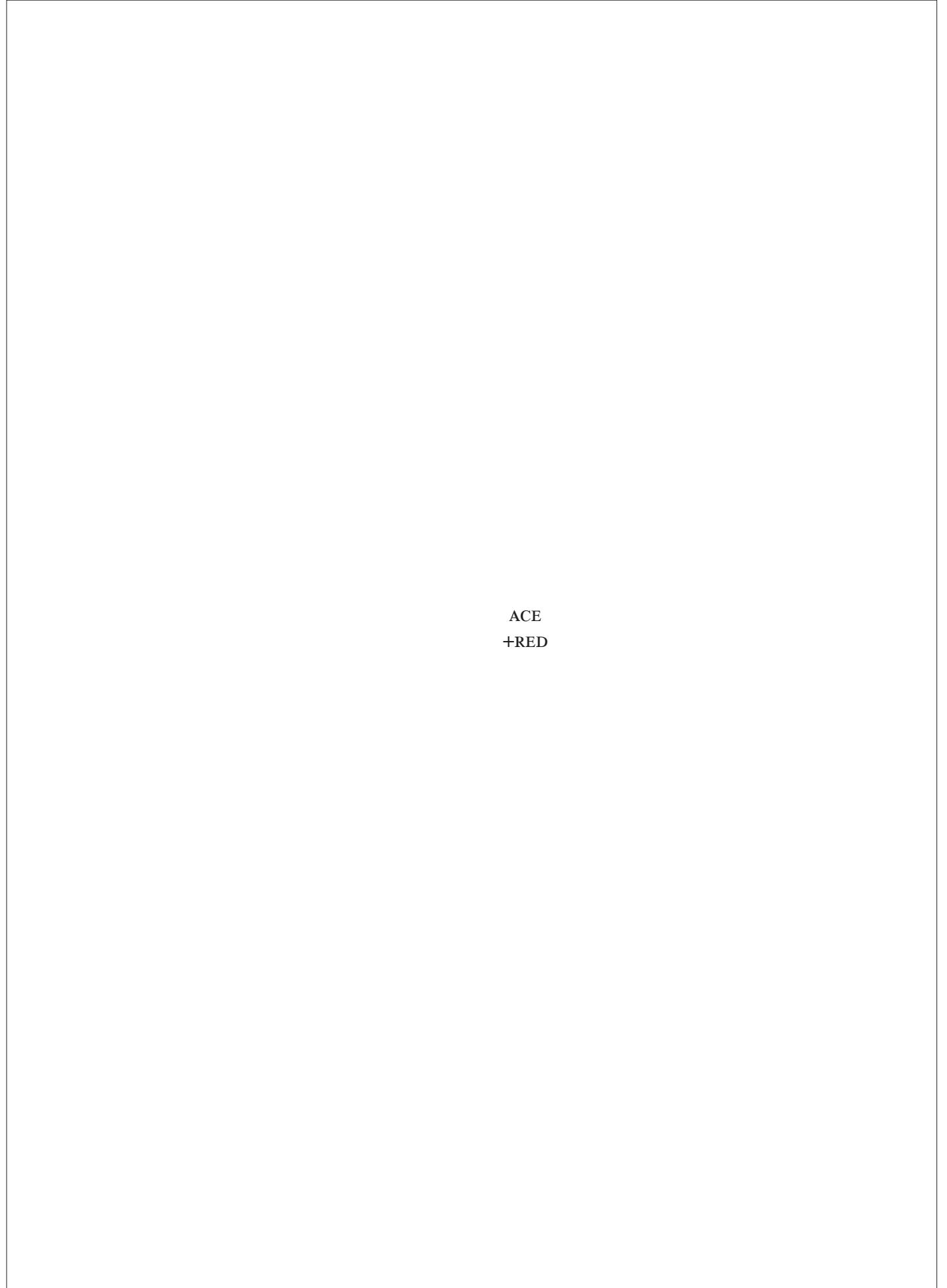
The governor had opposed the sale, vowing to break Verizon's monopoly of the CNMI's only fiber optic cable.

He had formed the First Responder Task Force—composed of at least 10 government agencies—that would tap into Homeland Security grants to diversify the CNMI's telecommunications system.

Babauta said Verizon's monopoly not only threatens the CNMI's security, but has also scared away potential investors. MTC and PTI, on the other hand, claimed that Babauta's antagonistic stance against the telecom deal paints a negative picture of the Northern Marianas to potential investors. (John Ravelo)

NIKKO

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Opinion

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Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

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'Gaming commission sued wrong defendant'

By LIBERTY DONES

REPORTER

The Attorney General's Office has filed two separate motions to dismiss twin lawsuits filed by the Tinian Casino Gaming Commission against Gov. Juan N. Babauta, saying it has sued the wrong defendant, its challenge is moot, and its claims are based on an incorrect interpretation of the CNMI Constitution and its laws.

"The petition should be dismissed in its entirety," said assistant attorney general James Livingstone, who is serving as attorney for Babauta.

The commission had filed separate petitions that asked the court to declare that Tinian Local Law 14-1, which was signed into law by

Babauta last May 24, is invalid, and that the results of the Nov. 1, 2003 popular initiative caused the adoption of changes to the Casino Act.

The commission, represented by its executive director Esther Hofsneider-Barr, named the governor as respondent in a petition that seeks judicial declaration that would effectively uphold the adoption of the Casino Act amendments through the popular initiative.

The commission said that, relying on the advice of their legal counsel, Elliot A. Sattler, it is reluctant to take any action pursuant to Tinian Local Law No. 14-1 since it could result in civil litigation or criminal prosecution of the commission members "for breach of their fiduciary duty."

Sattler had said that the Casino Act

could only be amended by "an act of equal dignity," specifically through a popular initiative, and not through the passage of a local law.

"[The] local law adopted by the Legislative Delegation...is not an act or law of 'equal dignity' to the Revised Casino Act, but...an 'inferior act' to the...Act, which was adopted pursuant to the constitutional authority of...Article XXI [local initiative]," Sattler said.

In a motion, Livingstone said that the governor is the wrong defendant because he has not taken any position on the matter. In fact, he said that the petitioner cannot point to any actions that the governor has taken with respect to the proposed initiative or how the interpretation that led to the

dispute is within his responsibilities.

Besides, it is not the respondent's responsibility to interpret the laws, as this belongs to the AGO.

In another motion, Livingstone said that the governor "has complete legislative immunity."

"The respondent is absolutely and completely immune from suit. He was only sued because he signed Tinian Local Bill 14-1 into law. As signing a bill into law is a legislative function, legislative immunity provides him complete immunity from suit," he said.

Moreover, he said that Tinian Local Law 14-1 is a lawful and valid law.

Livingstone said that the commission's counsel insisted that the Casino Act of 1989 could only be changed by local initiative and that laws passed by

initiative could only be modified by subsequent amendment, citing cases from Arizona and California.

However, Livingstone said that Sattler did not acknowledge that the constitutions of those states contain provisions that specifically limit the power of the legislature to amend laws by initiative.

"He also didn't point out that there was no provision in the NMI Constitution similar to those that exist in Arizona and California," he said.

The AGO also said that the question of whether or not the initiative petition became law is no longer a live controversy.

"It is moot. The Tinian legislative delegation enacted [HB 14-1] this past spring. This law is the same as the initiative petition," Livingstone said.

NEW

From Page 1

sibly be felt in the Marianas Saturday through Sunday.

The NWS located the circulation center of the disturbance about 500 miles east-southeast of Saipan and 550

miles east of Guam around 7am yesterday. The NWS said the disturbance could move westward at a slow pace and reach the islands by Sunday.

Once a group of thunderstorms come together under the right atmospheric conditions for a long enough time, they may organize into a tropical depression.

A tropical depression becomes a storm when wind strength reaches 39-74mph. A storm elevates into a typhoon when wind strength reaches at least 75mph. Once wind strength intensifies to at least 150mph, the weather disturbance becomes a supertyphoon.

Emergency Management Office di-

rector Rudolfo Pua advised residents to monitor weather developments through the media or by calling the EMO hotlines 322-0220 and 322-0222.

He said the EMO has been closely communicating with the NWS to monitor how the weather disturbance develops.

RETAILERS

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reached at 664-2341, fax no. 664-2349, or email attorneygeneral@saipan.com. Complaints may also be brought personally at the AGO in Capitol Hill.

FEMA assists emergency response

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has begun assisting local emergency response efforts, as it continues to await a disaster declaration from President Bush.

On Wednesday, Babauta said that FEMA made available two Black Hawk helicopters to allow him and Lt. Gov. Diego T. Benavente to conduct an aerial assessment of typhoon-related damage to Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Babauta earlier requested the FEMA for a Joint Federal/State Rapid Needs Assessment, even before Chaba left the islands. FEMA coordinating officer Bill Carwile also arrived on Saipan yesterday, the governor said.

Today, a C-130 aircraft would arrive on Saipan to unload FEMA equipment and supplies to support emergency functions, said Cathy Anderson, public information officer at the CNMI's Emergency Operations Center.

FEMA's support enlivened optimism that the President would grant Babauta's request for disaster declara-

tion, so that federal assistance could be made available to local residents who suffered from the typhoon, as well as to rehabilitate damaged public facilities and infrastructure.

Initial estimates placed the damage at over \$18 million.

As of yesterday, the CNMI has not received such declaration yet. "We do not know whether the President would give us a declaration. We cannot do anything until the President [issues] the declaration," Babauta said.

Shelter evacuated

Government personnel relocated some 105 evacuees from the Oleai Elementary School to the Ada Gymnasium due to sanitation concerns brought on by overflowing septic systems. Some five evacuees from the San Vicente Elementary School would be relocated to the gym, EOC's Anderson said.

Besides the Ada gym, which has a minimum capacity of 300 persons, Anderson said the Kagman Community Center was already being prepared to accommodate evacuees, in line with plans to resume classes in public schools. Another alternative long-term shelter, the Northern Marianas College's gymnasium, could not be used due to sustained damage from the typhoon.

Yesterday, the total number of evacuees remained at 996, including some

326 who stayed at the Marianas High School. Of the total, Saipan's evacuees totaled 833, while those on Tinian and Rota reached 65 and 98, respectively.

Authorities are still assessing other alternative shelters to accommodate the high number of evacuees. The governor said social halls and public libraries could be potential alternative sites.

The number of houses that were either destroyed or damaged reached at least 2,150, based on preliminary damage assessment conducted by the American Red Cross. Some 323 houses were totally destroyed, 883 sustained major damage, while 944 had minor damage.

Saipan had the most number of wrecked houses, with 222 totally destroyed, 583 sustaining major damage, and 367 left with minor damage. Tinian had 28, 122, and 54, respectively; while Rota had 73, 178, and 523.

Patients may be brought to hotels

With the Commonwealth Health Center operating at maximum capacity, the center is assessing the feasibility of housing patients at hotels, the EOC said.

"As most private health clinics have not yet opened since the storm, CHC is accommodating [their] patients, as well," it added. The CHC currently houses 54 in-patients and four intensive care unit patients.

The EOC also reported that power

has been restored at the Rota Health Center. Both Rota and Tinian, though, need additional physicians and nurses, as well as medical and linen supplies. The EOC said Rota's medical supplies might last only 1-2 weeks.

The EOC also reported that the Rota Main Fire Station, which houses firetrucks, ambulance, and response equipment, sustained significant damage, with Chaba blowing away its roof. The Department of Public Works' garment recycling facility on Saipan also sustained a damaged roof. Both facilities are being repaired.

Power, water restoration continues

The EOC said about 91 percent of Saipan's power supply has been fully restored. The CUC placed the figure at 92 percent. Among the villages that still had no power until yesterday was Chalan Kiya.

Rota's power supply has been 46-percent restored. The EOC said power supply to government facilities on Tinian has been restored to 15-percent normalcy, while residential areas was at 71 percent.

Water supply on Tinian has been fully restored. The EOC said water supplies on Rota and Saipan were almost fully restored as of yesterday, saying that they resumed 95- and 85-percent normal operations, respectively.

free up hospital beds and perform triage.

There could also be an economic and social wallop from disruption of transportation, commerce, even routine public safety, warns the plan, to be released Thursday by the Health and Human Services Department.

ERRATUM

Yesterday's issue of the *Saipan Tribune* erroneously reported that Ortiz' alleged assailant, Edgardo Palma, was out on bail. Palma, according to authorities, remains in jail. The court has imposed a \$100,000 bail for his temporary release.

CUC

From Page 1

will be done by Saturday on Saipan and Tinian," CUC executive director Lorraine Babauta said. "The men from Guam Power Authority are scheduled to arrive tonight [Thursday evening]. They will help expedite the power restoration work on Rota."

CUC power division manager Diego Babauta reported that 32 transformers have blown out and 36 power poles fell during the typhoon. Fifteen of the transformers and 14 of the power poles were located in areas getting power supply from Kiya 1, which covers As Terlaje, Fina Sisu, Dandan, Airport Road, San Vicente, Kileleman Road, As Gonno, and portions of Koblerville and Papago.

A total of 118 power lines also went down during the typhoon, and 35 of them were located in the Kiya 1 areas.

Unlike other villages where power is now at least 90 percent restored, about 15 percent of the Kiya 1 areas remain without electricity.

CUC has prepared a registration form for customers who still do not have power. Copies of the form are available at the CUC office on the 3rd floor of the Dandan Commercial Center, or at the CUC customer service office in Garapan.

Customers may also call CUC at 233-7028 or 29 during normal business hours for information regarding the status of power restoration efforts in their area.

The utility corporation's 24-hour emergency hotlines—with telephone numbers 235-0282 and 235-2282—should be reserved for reports of emergency cases, CUC said.

US

From Page 1

"We're all holding our breath," Dr. Julie Gerberding, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an interview Wednesday.

About 36,000 Americans die from regular flu every winter. Pandemics strike when the easily mutable influenza virus shifts to a strain that people have never experienced before.

It's impossible to predict the next pandemic's toll, but a bad one could

kill up to 207,000 Americans, says the Pandemic Influenza Response and Preparedness Plan.

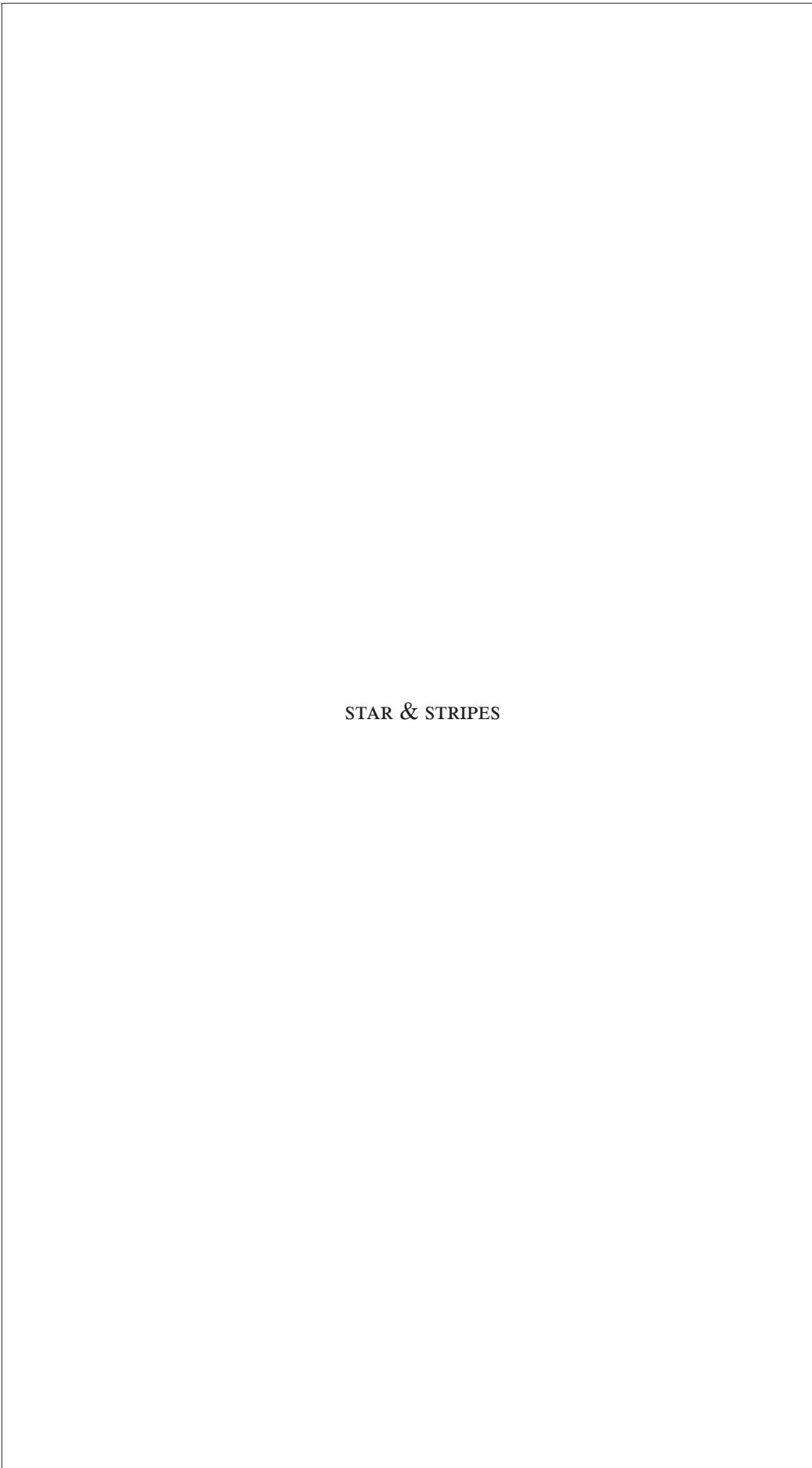
Millions of sick patients could swarm doctors' offices and hospitals, says the plan, which stresses that states and hospitals must figure out now how they would

JOETEN MOTORS KIA
+BLUE

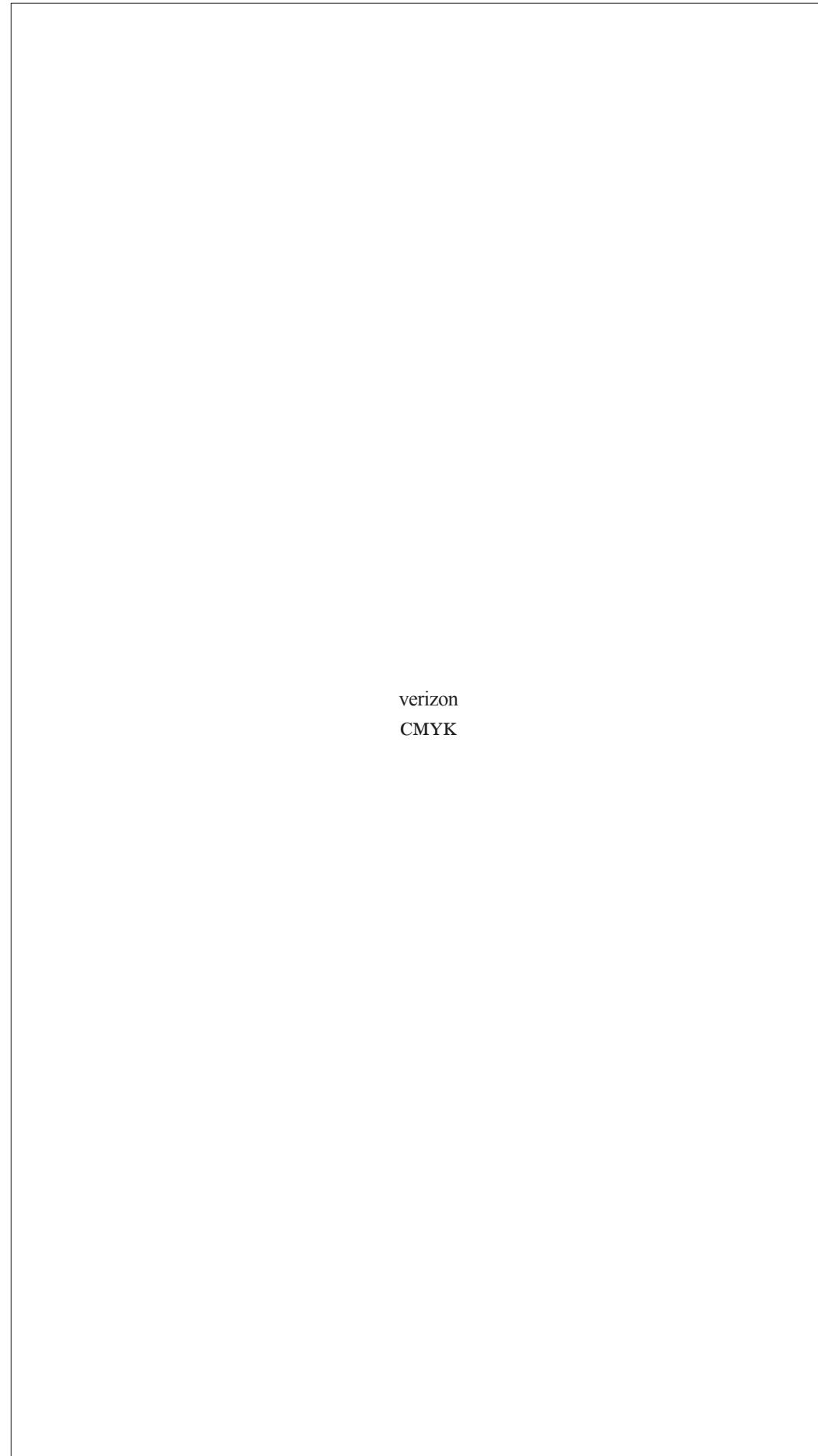
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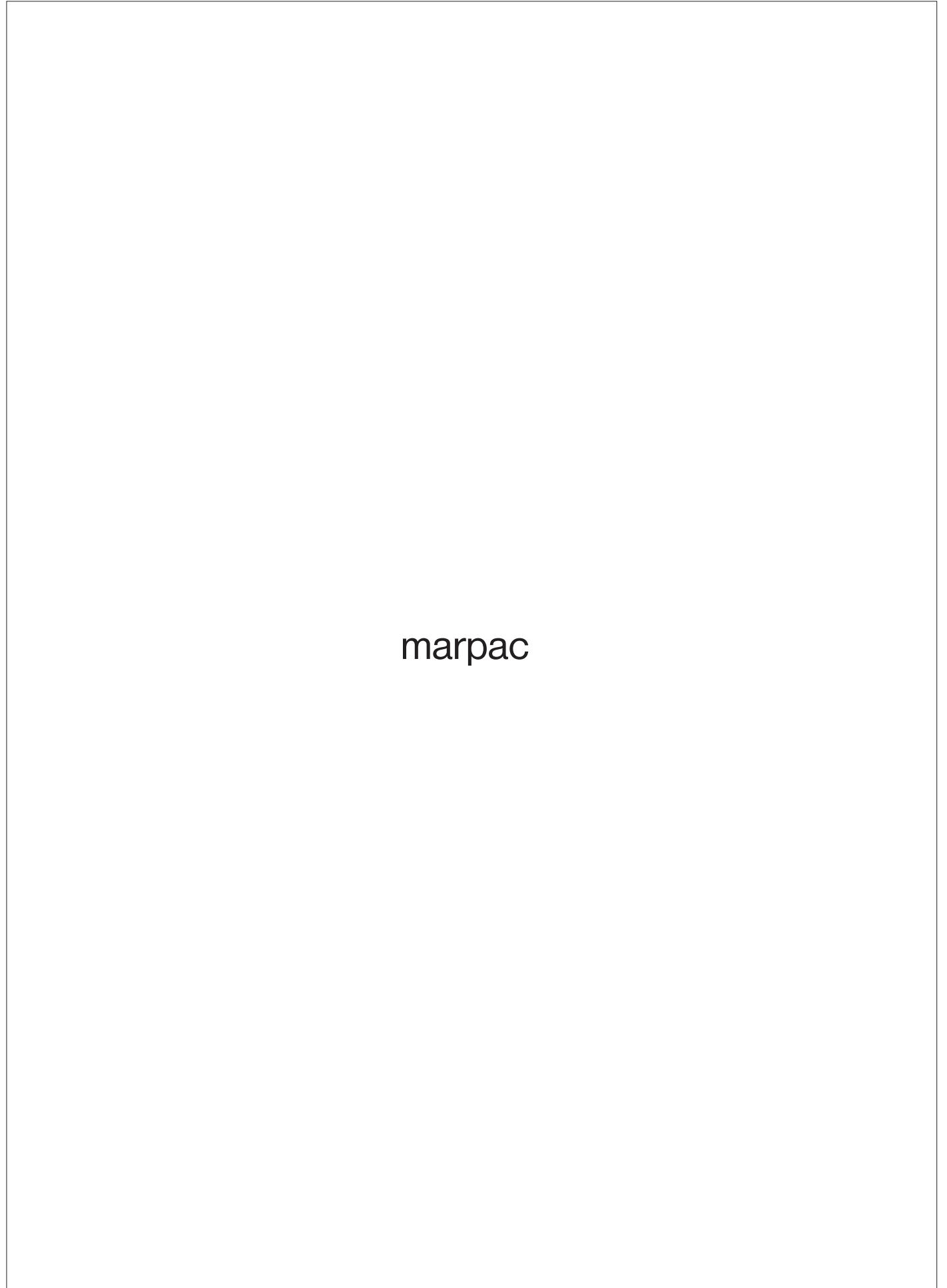


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GOP endorse ban on gay marriages

NEW YORK (AP)—Republicans endorsed an uncompromising position against gay unions Wednesday in a manifesto that contrasts with Vice President Dick Cheney's supportive comments about gay rights and the moderate face the party will show at next week's national convention.

A panel made up largely of conservative delegates approved platform language that calls for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage and opposes legal recognition of any sort for gay civil unions.

The GOP's full platform committee, seeking to appease party members who support gay or abortion rights without embracing their positions, adopted language later that states Republicans "respect and accept" dissenting views.

"We are the party of the open door," said Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, who led platform

deliberations on social issues.

But some activists sharply criticized their party for adopting a hard line in advance of a convention that will seek support from swing voters and more liberal Republicans.

Christopher Barron of the Log Cabin Republicans, a GOP gay-rights group, was livid after the panel endorsed the first-ever call for a constitutional gay-marriage ban in a GOP platform and went beyond that to oppose legal recognition of any same-sex unions.

"You can't craft a vicious, mean-spirited platform and then try to put lipstick on the pig by putting Rudy Giuliani and Arnold Schwarzenegger on in prime time," he said in an interview.

Giuliani, former New York mayor, and California Gov. Schwarzenegger are among moderate Republicans accorded prominent convention speaking slots.

Gary Bauer, who has cam-

paigned for the marriage amendment and against abortion rights as president of the group American Values, said the platform draft solidifies the GOP as the "party of hearth and home."

The draft urges a constitutional ban on abortion, echoing a call from previous platforms, and endorses President Bush's restrictions on federal financing of stem cell research. Some Republicans want the restrictions loosened.

Andrea Lafferty of the Traditional Values Coalition advised the network of conservative churches not to worry about the religious right's exclusion from prime time next week, given the advances against gay rights.

"Don't be distracted by Schwarzenegger or Giuliani or even the vice president," she said. "It is what George Bush says that counts and he has been faithful and fearless on this important issue."

Man burns Marine van after learning of GI son's death

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (AP)—A distraught father who had just been told his Marine son was killed in combat in Iraq set fire to a Marine Corps van and suffered severe burns Wednesday, police said.

Three Marines went to a house in Hollywood to tell the father and stepmother of Pfc. Alexander Arredondo that their 20-year-old son had died Tuesday in Najaf, family members said.

The father, Carlos Arredondo, 44, then walked into the garage, picked up a can of gasoline, a propane tank and a lighting device, police Capt. Tony Rode said. He smashed the van's window, doused the van with gasoline and set it ablaze,

despite attempts by the Marines to stop him, Rode said.

When they saw the Marines walking toward the front door, "My husband immediately knew that his firstborn son had been killed—and my husband did not take the news well," Melida Arredondo told reporters before police escorted her to the hospital.

"It doesn't surprise me that he was so traumatized. He went crazy," she said.

Police said Arredondo set fire to himself in the process of igniting the van, and that the Marines ended up pulling him from the burning vehicle and extinguishing the flames on him.

"The father was in disbelief, same as any of us would be af-

ter hearing this kind of news," Rode said. "But then the father basically loses it. You can only imagine what this father was going through. He snapped, to say the least."

"We have not seen this type of reaction. Every reaction is negative, it's the loss of a loved one," U.S. Marines spokesman Major Scott Mack said.

Arredondo was listed in serious condition with severe burns to his arms and legs in the burn unit of Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital. Hollywood is about 20 miles north of Miami.

Luz Marina Arredondo, Alexander's grandmother, felt the government was at fault for her grandson's death.

Police clear man in campers' deaths

SANTA ROSA, Calif. (AP)—A Wisconsin man who had been sought as a potential witness in the shooting deaths of two camp counselors has been cleared by authorities after he made himself available to investigators.

Nicholas Edward Scarseth, 21, contacted police to undergo questioning Tuesday after learning from media reports he was being sought in the investigation.

"He was cooperative, and was released after our interview," Lt. Dave Edmonds of the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department said in a statement Wednesday. "We presently do not view Mr. Scarseth as a suspect."

Two Sonoma County de-

tectives visited the home of Scarseth's parents in Chippewa Falls, Wis., to apologize, his mother said.

"It was all a big mix-up," Karen Scarseth told The Associated Press in a phone interview, "a big hullabaloo about nothing."

Dozens of detectives are investigating the murders of Lindsay Cutshall, 23, and her fiance, Jason Allen, 26, who were found Aug. 18 shot to death in their sleeping bags on a remote beach near the Northern California hamlet of Jenner. No weapon has been found.

Cutshall, of Fresno, Ohio, and Allen, of Zeeland, Mich., were reported missing Aug. 16

after they failed to show up at the Christian adventure camp where they worked in Coloma, about 40 miles east of Sacramento. Autopsies indicated they were killed Aug. 16 or 17.

Scarseth's parents said the tip that led detectives to their son came from a person who reported seeing the couple after their bodies were already in the morgue.

"It turned out to be a complete case of mistaken identity," said Scarseth's father, Mark Scarseth. "He is not the guy they were looking for."

The parents said detectives told them Scarseth never met the couple, but was able to provide some helpful information.

cpa

Peterson lawyer grills prosecution witness

REDWOOD CITY, Calif. (AP)—A prosecution investigator admitted Wednesday that he once suspected there was more than one person involved in Laci Peterson's disappearance and that Scott Peterson's former mistress may have been involved.

Steven Jacobson spent most of the morning discussing wiretaps of Peterson's telephone calls in the weeks after his pregnant wife vanished. But on cross-examination, the tone of questioning became heated as defense lawyer Mark Geragos pointedly asked the investigator about details

he included in affidavits written to secure warrants for the wiretaps.

"One of the reasons you wanted to get a wiretap is because you believed there were coconspirators in this case?" Geragos asked.

"Yes sir," Jacobson replied.

"Because you believed that the abduction of Laci Peterson could not have been done by one person?" Geragos prodded.

"I believed that there could possibly have been more than one person involved in Laci's disappearance," Jacobson replied.

Jacobson even wrote in one of the affidavits that "there was no way one person could have done that to Laci Peterson."

During two days of cross-examining Peterson's mistress, Amber Frey, Geragos accused her of not fully cooperating with police as she taped hundreds of phone calls between her and Peterson. She denied the allegations and stated that all calls between the pair were taped and handed over to police.

On Wednesday, Jacobson acknowledged that police at one time suspected Frey was not cooperating fully and may even have been involved.

"I felt it important to either corroborate her statements she was making to police or if she wasn't being truthful with police, to find that out, as well," Jacobson said.

Prosecutors allege Peterson killed his wife in their Modesto home around Dec. 24, 2002, then dumped her weighted body from a boat



Geragos

into San Francisco Bay. The remains of Laci Peterson and the couple's unborn son washed up a few months later, not far from where Peterson claimed he had gone fishing.

His attorneys claim he was framed after the real killer learned of his widely publicized alibi.

Earlier in the day, prosecutors played for jurors a series of secretly recorded phone calls in which police say Peterson lies to friends and family and, during one call, inquires about selling his home within weeks of his pregnant wife's disappearance.

ACROSS THE NATION

Cuban woman ships self in crate to US

MIAMI (AP)—A Cuban woman tucked herself inside a wooden crate the size of a small filing cabinet and had herself shipped from the Bahamas to Miami aboard a cargo plane.

The woman, whose name was not released, will be allowed to stay in the United States. A cargo crew found her curled up inside the crate after unloading it late Tuesday at the Miami airport.

"Certainly she's lucky to be alive," said Zach Mann, spokesman for Customs and Border Protection.

Under the so-called wet-foot, dry-foot policy, Cubans who reach U.S. soil are usually allowed to stay, while those who are picked up at sea are sent home. Federal officials released no information on how the woman got from Cuba to the Bahamas.

The 180-mile route is flown by a third-party contractor for the delivery service DHL, which said it was investigating.

The flight lasted only an hour, so the woman, described as being in her early 20s, would have been exposed to the cold for only a short period, Mann said.

Captain pleads guilty to false bomb scare

WILMINGTON, Del. (AP)—A Turkish ship captain who spent the past month behind bars after joking to the Coast Guard that there was a bomb aboard his vessel pleaded guilty Wednesday to making a false statement and was ordered to leave the country immediately.

"I apologize to the whole American public," Yildirim Beyozit Tumer said through an interpreter.

Tumer, 48, could have gotten five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. U.S. District Judge Joseph Farnan sen-

tenced him to time served and ordered that he be taken to the Philadelphia airport for an evening flight home.

The judge said the seaman made a "foolish mistake."

"It's clear that you have by your incarceration over the last 30 days learned that, particularly in the United States, the type of remark you made is not considered funny," Farnan said.

Accused mosque leaders released on bail

TROY, N.Y. (AP)—Two mosque leaders accused of supporting terrorism were released on bail Wednesday, one day after a federal judge reversed his initial decision to keep them behind bars.

Magistrate David Homer on Tuesday set bail at \$250,000 bond for both Yassin Muhiddin Aref and Mohammed Mosharref Hossain after concluding the men were not as dangerous as prosecutors first claimed.

Homer denied the men bail two weeks ago. But he cited a translation error in a key piece of evidence and an apparently weaker government case in his decision to set bail Tuesday.

Homer said prosecutors have not presented evidence the men were in contact with terrorists. He also said it appears less likely now the pair were threats to the community or substantial flight risks.

Prosecutors acknowledged a misinterpretation in a crucial document in the case. The indictment said a notebook found in a terrorist camp in northern Iraq last summer included an Arabic entry referring to Aref as "commander."

FBI translators later said the phrase in Kurdish meant "brother." Aref is an Iraqi Kurd.

Quick-spreading wildfire erupts in Nevada

RENO, Nev. (AP)—A wind-whipped wildfire sparked by a target shooter

erupted Wednesday near Reno and quickly spread to at least 2,500 acres, threatening homes, forcing evacuations and closing a major highway.

At least seven structures burned in the Pleasant Valley area, about seven miles from Reno, according to fire officials. Because of dense smoke, it was not immediately known if the burning structures were homes or outbuildings.

"When we left, the flames were coming right down the canyon," resident Joseph Martin said. "They were just saying, 'You might have to evacuate,' and 10 minutes later, they said, 'You got to get the hell out of there.'"

At least 350 homes were threatened by the fire, which was being whipped by winds gusting to 35 mph.

Firefighting crews on the ground were being assisted by helicopters and air tankers, officials said.

Farr said the fire was sparked by a man who was target shooting and fired a bullet that ricocheted off a rock.

shell

Asia

Maoist rebels blockade Nepal capital city

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA
AP WRITER

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP)—Without setting up a roadblock or even making an appearance, Maoist rebels cut off the capital from the rest of this Himalayan kingdom by declaring a blockade Wednesday, leaving Katmandu with only a few days of food and cooking fuel.

Extra police took to the roads leading into the city, but no drivers defied the guerrillas. In the past, rebels have burned dozens of vehicles and planted mines to enforce blockades, and early this week they threw a bomb at a luxury hotel for disregarding an order to shut down.

The government promised to provide security for travelers, but that didn't reassure civilians.

"Who is going to take such a big risk?" truck driver Mahesh Lama said. "Even if we get protection today, the rebels could take action against us for refusing their order tomorrow or even next week."

Because it is the rainy season, there were relatively few tourists in Katmandu, and only few of them had left because of the unrest, hotel managers said. So far, they said, there had

been no cancellations for the main season, which begins in September. The Soaltee Hotel closed and moved its guests to other hotels after the bomb hurled over a wall exploded on its tennis court Monday night.

The rebels—inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong—have been fighting since 1996 to replace Nepal's monarchy with a communist state. More than 9,500 people have died in the war, most of them in rural areas far from the capital.

The guerrillas have struck Katmandu before, planting bombs under buses and motorcycles to enforce strikes or inspiring students to shut down schools. But Wednesday's blockade was unusual because it was succeeding simply on fear.

There were no reports of rebels setting up barricades on any roads, and police officers told The Associated Press they had seen no guerrillas. But the insurgents were believed to be watching the roads, which were empty except for military and police vehicles.

The rebels sent a brief notice to newspapers last week saying that beginning Wednesday they would impose the blockade for an indefinite period to pressure

the government to free jailed guerrillas immediately and provide information on others who are missing. They threatened to attack any vehicles traveling on the highways.

Other than planes, which are too expensive for most in this impoverished nation, roads are the only way to travel in the Katmandu Valley, and its 1.5 million people depend on trucks to bring fuel, food and other goods.

Many store owners said they would run out of vegetables and other food if the blockade lasted for more than a few days.

Iswor Pokhrel, minister for industries, commerce and supplies, said the city had a few days supply of kerosene for cooking. Officials at Nepal Oil Corp., the country's sole petroleum distributor, said it had enough fuel for cars and buses to last about two weeks.

With buses sitting idle, hundreds of people milled about in the capital's main station.

"We have little money left and we have no idea when we will be able to get home. We are going to starve and probably have to sleep out in the open," said Rupesh Khatri, who had brought his son to a hospital in Katmandu for treatment and

wanted to go home.

Some of Nepal's biggest businesses already had suspended operations this week because of threats from the rebels. After the Soaltee Hotel was bombed, the largest cigarette manufacturer, Surya Nepal Ltd., and Bottlers Nepal, the company bottling Coca-Cola, shut down.

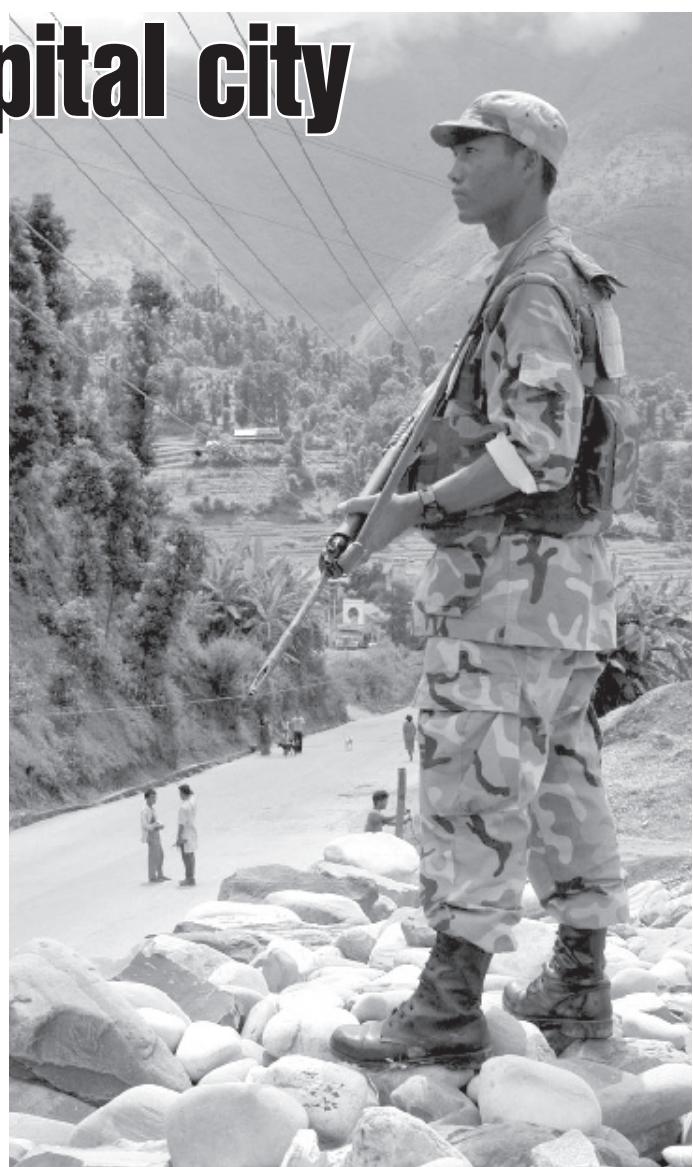
The government of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had no comment Wednesday on the rebels' demands.

Authorities refuse to say how many rebels are in detention. Nepalese law allows soldiers to detain people suspected of being rebels for 90 days without charge, but human rights groups claim many are kept much longer.

Peace talks broke down last August when the rebels walked out, accusing the government of failing to meet their demands, including elections for a special assembly to draft a new constitution.

A new government took office in June and has repeatedly called for more negotiations, but the rebels have not responded.

"The peace process was moving in the right direction but such acts don't assist the process," Pokhrel, the commerce minister, said of the blockade.



AP
A police officer keeps watch on the Prithvi Highway during a blockade on the outskirts of Katmandu, Nepal, Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2004.

shell
cmyk

Rebels free RP soldiers after 5 months

By JIM GOMEZ
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY ENCAMPMENT, Philippines

(AP)—Communist guerrillas in the eastern Philippines on Wednesday released two soldiers captured in a March gunbattle, in a humanitarian gesture to counter Washington's claims that they are terrorists.

It wasn't clear, however, if the release would effect peace talks to end a 35-year-old Maoist insurgency. Last week, the rebels

indefinitely postponed the next round of Norwegian-brokered negotiations in protest at their continuing inclusion on U.S. and European terrorist lists.

Guarded by black-clad New People's Army guerrillas, 1st Lt. Ronaldo Fidelino and Pfc. Ronnel Nemenzo walked out of a humid tropical jungle in southeastern Camarines Sur province, about 300 kilometers (185 miles) southeast of the capital, Manila.

A guerrilla leader, Russel Guerrero, signed a release order in front of dozens of vil-

lagers in Presentacion town, where the soldiers were interviewed by lawyers and underwent a medical checkup.

"The proper treatment and release of the prisoners of war is proof that we are not terrorists," Guerrero said.

The soldiers were handed over to representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross and then received by government negotiator Silvestre Bello III and their families.

"I am finally free. I'm so happy," said Fidelino, who hugged his wife and daughter in a tearful reunion.

Both captives had grown beards and wore camouflage pants and white shirts marked

"POW." They said they were shaken by nearly six months in captivity, but were treated well despite being handcuffed most of the time.

At times, the soldiers played chess with their captors or sang songs. One guerrilla crafted rings and bracelets from wild vines for Fidelino's wife and daughter and others caught parakeets for the soldiers to take home.

"We are friends now but once I'm back at work as a soldier and deployed in the battlefield, we're of course enemies again," Fidelino said.

Chief rebel negotiator Luis Jalandoni said the soldiers were released on humanitarian grounds. He said the army had

agreed to suspend its operations in the region for a week after they are released to allow the guerrillas to safely withdraw.

"We think this safe and orderly release will improve the atmosphere in overcoming the problems that have arisen," he said, referring to the peace talks.

The Marxist umbrella group, the National Democratic Front, which includes the 8,500-strong New People's Army rebels, postponed the next round of peace talks, scheduled for next week in Oslo, Norway, to give the government time to "fulfill its obligations."

The rebels want the government to help get the New People's Army removed from

American and European Union lists of foreign terrorist organizations. It also wants political prisoners released and compensation for victims of human rights abuses under late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Jalandoni said if the government makes a "dramatic" move such as releasing all political prisoners, "the peace talks can be resumed very soon."

Despite the talks, there is no permanent cease-fire and sporadic fighting continues.

Bello said Tuesday that Manila has asked the United States, the European Union and the Netherlands to "judge (the rebel group) through its participation in the peace process."

China appeals to N. Korea for nuke talks

BEIJING (AP)—China appealed to North Korea on Tuesday to join working meetings before a new round of six-party talks on dismantling its nuclear program, despite the North's declaration that it saw no point in attending.

"All the parties should agree to hold the framework meeting as soon as possible," said Ning Fukui, China's ambassador on the Korean nuclear issue. He was speaking outside a meeting with Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who was en route to North Korea.

Ning's appeal came after North Korea said Monday it was impossible for its diplomats to attend the meeting, complaining that the United States wasn't interested in "making the dialogue fruitful."

The last round of talks ended in June without major progress toward a settlement but with a promise to hold a new round by the end of September and for lower-level officials to gather before that to work on technical details. Other participants in the talks organized by China are

South Korea, Japan and Russia.

"We believe that if all the parties show their sincerity and flexibility and further clarify their stance and proposals, then a new compromise can be reached," Ning said.

Ning said he couldn't say when the meeting might take place, but added, "I believe the North Koreans will not withdraw from the six-way talks process under current conditions."

The North Korean government complained Monday that Washington has "destroyed ... the foundation for the talks, making it impossible for the (North Korea) to go to the forthcoming meeting of the working group."

But Ning insisted the North Koreans "did not say they will not participate." Instead, he said, "they expressed that due to the differences that exist over their stance between North Korea and the United States, there is no basis for holding the meeting."

The dispute flared in 2002 when Washington said North Korea admitted operating a secret uranium-based nuclear program in violation of a 1994 agreement.

S. Korean party leader steps down in scandal

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—The head of South Korea's ruling party resigned Thursday amid suggestions he had covered up his father's past as a military policeman for Japanese occupiers.

Shin Ki-nam, chairman of the ruling Uri party, had previously said his father was only a teacher during the 1910-45 occupation. But this week, he was forced to admit his father worked for the Japanese forces, confirming a magazine report.

The implication that Shin may have lied to cover up his father's past has made him a political liability as the country debates the role of collaborators during South Korea's colonial past. President Roh Moo-hyun has called for government investigations into the pro-Japa-

nese activities of collaborators.

Shin apologized to those who fought for Korean independence, bowing his head before journalists at a news conference Thursday. "In place of my father, I deeply apologize and seek forgiveness," he said.

Shin said he was stepping down from the party's chairmanship so he wouldn't be an obstacle to inquiries into the colonial period, and to "lessen difficulties that the party is experiencing because of me."

Shin said the past three days since the revelations had been the most difficult in his life, and that he would seek to unearth more about his father's history. He said he hadn't known his father had served in the Japanese military during the occupation.

shell back to school

cmyk

17 hurt in Thailand bomb blast

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP)—A bomb exploded at a busy morning market in Thailand's troubled Muslim-dominated south on Thursday, wounding at least 17 people, a police official said.

The device hidden in a motorcycle blew up at a market where police and soldiers often stop for breakfast in the Sukhirin district of Narathiwat province, said police Lt. Col. Amnuay Pongsawat.

Police believe the bomb was triggered by remote control when a truck carrying security officials arrived.

Four soldiers, six police and about 10 bystanders were wounded in the at-

tack, seven of them seriously. The blast also damaged two motorcycles and three trucks parked nearby, he said.

Thailand's largely Muslim southern provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Pattani have seen a spate of violent attacks in recent months that officials have blamed mostly on Islamic militants.

Muslim separatists waged a low-key uprising against the central government for years before fading away after a government amnesty in the 1980s.

The attack came as a once-formidable Thai separatist group, the Pattani United Liberation Organization, posted a message on its Web site warning

southern Muslims against frequenting nightclubs, police checkpoints, airports, railways and areas where important Thai officials may travel.

The authenticity of the statement could not be immediately verified.

The blast came after several bombs exploded late Saturday outside hotels and karaoke bars in nearby Yala province and wounded more than a dozen people.

Thailand is predominantly Buddhist, and Muslims in the southern provinces near Malaysia have long complained about unfair treatment by the government, particularly in jobs and education.

Malaysian woman goes for scorpions record

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—A Malaysian woman who's trying to reclaim a world record by living in a locked glass box with more than 6,000 scorpions has been stung once, is suffering a fever and scarcely sleeps because the creatures keep crawling over her.

Nur Malena Hassan, 27, said Wednesday she has a "50/50 chance" of reaching her target of being cooped up with the poisonous arachnids for 36 consecutive days to set a new record for the longest stay in a room full of scorpions.

"I'm feeling so much tension," Nur Malena told The Associated Press by telephone from the specially built glass room that she moved into Saturday in a shopping mall in Kuantan, a city about 160 miles northeast of Kuala Lumpur.

"Nighttime is the worst," she said. "I can only sleep two or three hours, since scorpions get so active at night. But I want to show that Malaysians are capable of world-class efforts."

Nur Malena said she has a mild fever after being stung on her face Sunday. But scorpions rarely sting unless they're disturbed, so she remains cautious while moving within



Hassan

the room, which measures about 12 feet by 10 feet.

Nur Malena, who's been nicknamed "Scorpion Queen" in this Southeast Asian country, set a world record in 2001 by living for 30 days with 2,700

scorpions. She was stung seven times, fell unconscious and nearly gave up the potentially deadly feat.

Her record was shattered a year later by Kanchana Ketkeaw, a woman in neighboring Thailand who lived in a similar glass room for 32 days with 3,400 scorpions.

"Having 6,000 scorpions is different from 3,000," Nur Malena said. "It's just worse."

Nur Malena has built up an endurance to stings after more than five years of training. But she says she'll still pass out if she's stung three times within a short span.

Thousands of Malaysians have visited the mall to observe Nur Malena in the room, which she leaves just once a day for a 15-minute bathroom break under self-imposed rules. She sleeps, eats and performs Muslim prayers in the room.

Boredom sometimes sets in, but Nur Malena keeps entertained by watching DVDs on a TV set. Her favorite movie right now: "Spider-Man."

Malaysians have displayed a growing penchant in recent years for offbeat records—such as the highest backward climb up a staircase and the largest number of old people at a circus.



A couple of tourists walk upstairs on the central town of Ikaho, north of Tokyo, Monday, Aug. 23, 2004.

Japan's hot springs sullied by scandal

IKAHO, Japan (AP)—For at least four centuries, the rust-colored waters that bubble out of the mountainside behind the Ikaho Shrine have been as good as gold to this little spa village. Shared by dozens of inns, the spring waters are among the most venerable in the country.

"Coming to our village isn't just about washing off the body," said Kenzo Tamura, who runs a small outdoor bath just a few steps away from Ikaho's gurgling fountainhead. "People come here to cleanse their souls."

Just what they have been cleansing their souls in, however, has become Japan's latest scandal.

Over the past several weeks, Japan's media has been awash in revelations that artificial coloring and even tap or heated well water have been used at some of the country's most famous spas, prompting government investigations and threatening to dampen a budding recovery of the domestic tourism industry.

The scandal has hit at

something very dear to the Japanese heart.

Few things are considered as sacrosanct here as the bath. Tens of millions of Japanese arrange vacations each year around a good, hot soak, heading off to the mountains to bathe in the mineral-laden waters of the ubiquitous natural springs that dot their volcanic islands.

Along with offering a respite from city life, spa waters are said to heal everything from gout to dandruff. Hot springs' outings usually don't come cheap, either. Stays at average inns in the better-known resorts can easily cost hundreds of dollars per night.

But the image of the 22,000 hot springs inns across the country has been taking a beating.

In the opening salvo of this summer's widening scandal, a weekly magazine reported last month that spa operators in Shirahone, another well-known resort in Japan's central mountains, had for several years been pouring a coloring agent into their baths, which are renowned for their milky white hue.

crm

ASIAN Briefs

5th worker dies from Japan nuke accident

TOKYO (AP)—A worker injured in Japan's deadliest nuclear-plant accident earlier this month has died, raising the death toll to five, an official said Wednesday.

Masaru Kameiwa, 30, had been severely burned in the Aug. 9 accident, which occurred when a corroded cooling pipe—carrying boiling water and superheated steam—burst at a plant in Mihami, about 200 miles west of Tokyo.

Kameiwa died on Wednesday at a hospital in Fukui, northern Japan, said Fukui prefectural government spokesman Katsunori Kondo.

Four workers at the plant were killed nearly instantly, and seven others were injured. No radiation was released.

Kondo said one of the injured workers had been released from the hospital after recovering, but five others, including three with serious injuries, were still receiving treatment.

The accident deepened concerns about the safety of Japan's 52 nuclear plants, which supply about a third of the country's electricity. Two workers died in a radiation leak at a fuel reprocessing plant in northeast of Tokyo in 1999.

9 Pakistani militants get life for attack

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP)—An anti-terrorism court on Wednesday sentenced nine Pakistani Islamic militants to life in prison for the deaths of three people in an attack and bombing at the Macedonian consulate here in 2002, a lawyer said.

Judge Haq Nawaz Baloch who delivered the verdict said the nine men were given double life sentences for murder and an additional 10 years for robbery and property seizure, said prosecutor Mazar Qayum.

The attack on Dec. 5, 2002 at the offices of the consulate in the volatile southern city of Karachi was one of several that followed Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's decision to support the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Investigators found three bodies—two Pakistani men and a woman—in the rubble of the consulate, each with their hands and feet bound and their throats slit. Messages scrawled on a wall referred to al-Qaida and warned against "infidels."

The militants are believed to have executed the victims, stolen computers and other property from the consulate, before detonating a bomb to blow it up.

Oldest panda raised in captivity dies

BEIJING (AP)—The oldest panda raised in captivity has died at an eastern China zoo at the age of 33, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Wednesday.

Peipei died Aug. 13 of organ failure at a zoo in Hangzhou, a city southwest of Shanghai, the report said. It said the panda's age was the equivalent of 100 in human terms.

Giant pandas are generally found in temperate forests in central China. Among the best recognized—but rarest—animals in the world, as few as 1,600 giant pandas survive in the mountain forests of central China. Another 120 are in Chinese breeding facilities and zoos, and about 20 live in zoos outside China, according to the Web site of the National Zoo in Washington.

Pandas are threatened by loss of habitat, poaching and a low reproduction rate. Females in the wild normally have a cub once every two to three years.

Pakistan government set for power transfer

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain announced his resignation Wednesday as part of an orchestrated power transfer that will see the finance minister take his place by the end of the week.

Opposition parties have derided the change in prime ministers as an affront to democracy, but government leaders have hailed it as a peaceful transfer in a country with a history of political volatility.

"I am thankful to the nation and the parliament. I tried to receive the confidence of the parliament and the nation. Shaukat Aziz would take office as elected prime minister in a few days," Hussain, 59, told the National Assembly.

Hussain was expected to formally submit his resignation to President Gen. Pervez Musharraf later Wednesday.

Violence erupts in China corruption fight

SHANGHAI, China (AP)—Liu Haiyun was about to step outside her family's apartment in northern China to pick up breakfast when the risks of her husband's job as an anti-corruption investigator literally blew up in her face.

A bomb attached to the front door of the fifth-floor apartment in the city of Xingtai exploded, leaving Liu's legs, hands and face severely wounded, state media and officials said Wednesday. The blast was so powerful that it ripped iron security doors in the building off their hinges.

The attack Aug. 19 on the home of Li Haisheng, head of the city's anti-corruption bureau, highlights the perils faced by officials and ordinary Chinese who try to fight the rampant corruption

that taints almost every aspect of public life in China.

Attackers range from gangland figures to corrupt officials trying to defend their privileges. Reports of attacks by officials on farmers trying to expose abuses are common.

Li, who wasn't injured in the bombing, gained local notoriety for cracking a bribery case involving top city officials, the Oriental Morning Post newspaper reported. It said he had recently ordered the local chief prosecutor put under a form of house arrest.

The attack is believed to have been aimed at Li, said a police spokeswoman who refused to give her name. She wouldn't give any other details. News reports, however, said it was

probably revenge for Li's corruption busting.

Police reportedly were questioning each one of Xingtai's 3,000 taxi drivers after a witness saw a man rush from the building and hail a cab just before the explosion.

Staff at the city's No. 3 Hospital, where Liu was first treated, said she had been moved to another facility to ensure her security.

Thousands of Chinese officials are punished every year for extortion, embezzlement and other abuses. Some have been executed.

But many leaders appear ambivalent about allowing an all-out attack on graft, especially within the ruling Communist Party, possibly fearing it could

threaten their own authority.

That ambivalence was illustrated by the government's handling of an anti-graft official who issued an open letter complaining of corruption in a road project in the southeastern province of Fujian.

That letter was posted on the Web site of the People's Daily, the main party newspaper, but later removed.

The official said he began wearing a bulletproof vest after receiving death threats. Party officials in Fujian attacked the official in state media, accusing him of an "extremely erroneous act" and of colluding with unspecified anti-Chinese forces—a common tactic in official efforts to discredit government critics.

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Asia

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Arafat fends off challenge over reforms

By MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH
AP WRITER

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP)—Yasser Arafat fended off another challenge to his authority Wednesday when Palestinian lawmakers backed away from sweeping reform demands, instead approving a watered down set of recommendations.

A wave of chaos plaguing the Palestinian territories, meanwhile, took another victim when gunmen in Gaza seriously wounded a senior intelligence official.

The two developments are an outgrowth of years of Arafat's one-man control, which international donors and Palestinian reformers have criticized as corrupt and ineffi-

cient, pitting rival security forces against each other.

Israel's intention to withdraw from the Gaza Strip late next year has sparked a power struggle among rival armed groups as Israel refuses to coordinate with Arafat's regime. Israel contends Arafat is implicated in terrorism, but the United States and Egypt warn that bypassing his Palestinian Authority might lead to a Gaza takeover by Islamic militants.

In Wednesday's incident, gunmen opened fire at a convoy carrying the deputy Palestinian intelligence chief, seriously wounding him in the chest and killing two bodyguards. Abu Rajab was transferred to an Israeli hospital for treatment.

The Palestinian officer, Tareq Abu Rajab, was traveling in a two-vehicle convoy in northern Gaza City when shots rang out, witnesses said. One of the vehicles flipped over.

There was no immediate word on who carried out the shooting. Security officials said they were investigating.

Rajab, who keeps a low public profile, is an old Arafat ally. Most recently, he was in charge of security for Palestinian diplomatic missions abroad, officials said.

Arafat, meanwhile, stonewalled his detractors once again Wednesday.

Refusing to sign presidential decrees needed for restructuring his administration, Arafat

instead pledged to take the necessary steps in a letter to the parliament, and the lawmakers approved it, 31-12.

The recommendations included forming a viable government capable of fighting corruption more effectively and restoring law and order. It also called on Arafat to follow through on promises made in a speech last week to crack down on graft.

Arafat, confined to his Ramallah headquarters for three years by Israel, has come under increasing local pressure to streamline and clean up his administration and to relinquish authority over

some or all of the many competing security forces.

Arafat has resisted, while pledging to take action. However, matters have come to a head with the spreading chaos in Gaza and signs of loss of control in the West Bank, where armed gangs of militants rule the streets in some towns. A recent wave of kidnappings underlined the anarchic security situation.

Israel and the United States are boycotting Arafat and demanding he give up control of security forces and consolidate them into efficient corps to stop violence.



Arafat

But Arafat, the only leader the Palestinians have had for four decades and revered as a national symbol, is giving little ground, and despite frustration with his methods, there is little chance of his being deposed.

In his letter, Arafat emphasized the principle of separation of powers—an implied slap at parliament for criticizing his administration—as well as turning corruption cases over to the attorney general and leaving security forces under the control of the security council, which Arafat chairs.

Reformers sounded exasperated after several meetings with Arafat and threats of a sit-down strike failed to yield concrete results.

Thatcher's son charged in coup plot

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP)—The son of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, an ex-race car driver whose business career has been dogged by accusations of questionable arms deals and shady ventures, was charged Wednesday with helping finance a foiled coup plot in oil-rich Equatorial Guinea.

Thatcher, 51, was arrested at his Cape Town home and taken before Wynberg Magistrate's Court to be charged with violating the country's Foreign Military Assistance Act.

"We have evidence, credible evidence, and information that he was involved in the attempted coup," said Sipho Ndwema, a police spokesman. "We refuse that South Africa be a springboard for coups in Africa and elsewhere."

Authorities in several African nations announced in March that they had foiled an attempt to overthrow President Teodoro Obiang of Equatorial Guinea, who is widely accused of torture and other abuses while ruling a nation that has become the continent's third-biggest oil producer.

Magistrate Awie Kotze placed Thatcher under house arrest and gave him until Sept. 8 to post bail of \$300,000. Thatcher, who nervously tapped a pen in his palm during the proceeding, smiled and said, "Thank you," before he was led away to be driven home.

Outside court, Thatcher's lawyers said he was arrested on suspicion of providing financing for a helicopter linked to the coup plot.

"Mr. Thatcher is not guilty of any allegations," attorney Alan Bruce-Brand told reporters. "He has nothing to hide and is already cooperating with authorities."

There was no immediate reaction from Thatcher's mother, who was thought to be in the United States.

Police raided Thatcher's home in the upscale suburb of Constantia shortly after 7 a.m. and investigators searched his records and computers.

Hours later, he was driven away in a police vehicle. But his court appearance was delayed when he was robbed of his shoes, jacket and cell phone in a crowded holding cell, according to a court official who witnessed the attack. Police recovered the items.

Australian held in Cuba pleads innocent

GUANTANAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba (AP)—An Australian cowboy who converted to Islam and allegedly fought for the Taliban in Afghanistan went before a U.S. military commission Wednesday and pleaded innocent to war crimes charges.

Lawyers for David Hicks also challenged the impartiality of four members and one alternate. It was the second attack on the commission's ability to be fair since arraignments began a day earlier.

Hicks, 29, in dark gray suit and tie, sat expressionless while listening to charges—including conspiracy to commit war crimes, aiding the enemy and attempted murder for allegedly firing at U.S. or coalition forces—carrying a

possibility of life in prison.

"Sir, to all charges, not guilty," Hicks said, then breathed a huge sigh. He smiled after the five-member panel rose to conclude the hearing. It set his trial for Jan. 10.

Captured in Afghanistan, Hicks arrived at Guantanamo Bay in January 2002 as a slight, baby-faced 26-year-old. At Wednesday's hearing he looked considerably older and stern.

It was the first time his family had seen him in five years.

"My expectation was that we would have David back to Australia after the first three months," his father, Terry Hicks, 58, said after arriving Tuesday from Adelaide, Australia, with Hick's stepmother, Beverly. "I don't think it is a fair and honest system."

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Americas graded on disabled facilities

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Only five of 24 countries in the Americas provide adequate protection and treatment to their disabled citizens, according to a new report by a coalition of disability groups.

The United States, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica and Jamaica were ranked as the “most inclusive” countries in dealing with the disabled in the report released Tuesday while Belize, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Surinam were judged the “least inclusive.”

The 441-page International Disability Rights Monitor Regional Report of the Americas was released during a two-week meeting of a U.N. committee drawing up a treaty to protect the rights of an estimated 600 million people worldwide suffering from disabilities. The next report, to be released in December, will focus on the Asia-Pacific region.

Ecuador’s U.N. Ambassador Luis Gallegos, the chairman of

the drafting committee, said the report recognized “the advances that have been made, but also that we have a long road to work on the disability issue” to end discrimination.

Ecuador was among 10 countries classified as “moderately inclusive” in the report, along with Argentina, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

At present, the treatment of people with disabilities varies widely from country to country. Some nations have model legislation that mandates the fair and equal rights of people with disabilities to access, education and employment; other countries subject people with disabilities to horrific and degrading treatment, warehousing them in institutions designed to remove them from society.

The report card on the 24 countries in the Americas is based on 11 questions covering six issues: support for the U.N. treaty, legal protections

for the disabled, education and employment opportunities, accessibility, health services and housing, and communication.

Brazil ranked first with the highest marks on all six issues. The United States had the highest marks on five issues, but was second because President George W. Bush’s administration has voiced opposition to a global treaty to protect and promote the human rights of disabled persons, saying national action is more effective.

The report also found that the national constitutions of 50 percent of countries in the Americas specifically protect the rights of people with disabilities, that less than one third of all children with disabilities are likely to attend school and that close to 70 percent of people with disabilities do not have jobs.

Gallegos said poverty is a major issue because 450 million disabled “live in the underdeveloped world,” but he said culture is also very important.



TOMATO FIGHT

Young people throw ripe tomatoes at each other during the annual “Tomatina” tomato fight in the town of Bunol, near Valencia, eastern Spain, Wednesday Aug. 25, 2004. Some 20,000 people turned 132 tons of tomatoes into pulp during the annual festival.



French President Jacques Chirac, followed by Defense Minister Michele Alliot-Marie, walks past war veterans during ceremonies marking the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of Paris, Wednesday Aug. 25, 2004 in Paris.

Paris turns back clock to mark Liberation

PARIS (AP)—With French and American flags, vintage military vehicles and heartfelt memories, Paris on Wednesday marked the 60th anniversary of its liberation from the occupying Nazis—the day the French capital recovered its honor after four years of hardship and shame.

President Jacques Chirac, in an address at Paris City Hall, urged “vigilance” by younger generations in dealing with present-day manifestations of “this hate of the other, still at work, the most somber face of the human soul.”

The president was referring to racist-inspired acts plaguing today’s France, including anti-Semitic attacks.

Parisians braved intermittent rain during daylong celebrations meant to capture the

drama and euphoria of Aug. 25, 1944, when the Allies marched on a capital already in revolt and the World War II occupiers surrendered—ignoring Hitler’s order to demolish Paris.

Even writer Ernest Hemingway joined in, famously “liberating” the bar at the Ritz Hotel.

The day was charged with symbolism as France remembered its liberators, from American soldiers who backed a French division, clinching victory, to communist Resistance members in the vanguard of the underground fight.

The liberation was “also France standing, France restored in its honor, in its values and in its rights,” Chirac said.

De Gaulle’s victory march the following day down the Champs-Elysees has come to symbolize the rebirth of France, shamed for its World War II collaboration.

“It was a day of glory,” said Claude Correia, a former Resistance member. “We knew that if Paris were liberated, it would be the start of the deliverance” for all of France.

At the Eiffel Tower, six

firefighters hoisted the French tricolor in a re-enactment of the secret scramble up the Tower’s 1,710 steps 60 years ago to raise a homemade flag.

It was there that Gen. Charles

US seeks more African troops in Sudan

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The United States is pushing for an expanded African Union force to monitor the cease-fire in Sudan’s troubled Darfur region and will support sanctions against Khartoum if the government resists, U.S. Ambassador John Danforth said.

In an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday, Danforth said Washington believes the most effective way to improve security for the 1.2 million Sudanese who have fled their homes to escape attacks by government-backed Arab militias is to increase the presence of outsiders in Darfur.

“So I think the big push now is to push the presence of outsiders, mainly the AU, as monitors,” he said. “And if the government resists that, then in my view the United States will have been given no choice but to support sanctions.”

The 53-nation African Union currently has 80 observers in Darfur, protected by 150 Rwandan soldiers, to monitor the rarely observed cease-fire signed in April. It has proposed sending nearly 2,000 peacekeepers, an offer strongly

supported by the United States but initially rejected by the Sudanese government.

At African Union-brokered peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria, on Wednesday, however, Sudanese Agriculture Minister Majzoub al-Khalifa Ahmad, who heads the government delegation, modified the country’s rejection. He said the government had no objections to an AU force used solely to usher rebels off the battlefield and into their barracks.

Danforth, a former Missouri senator who was the U.S. point man on Sudan before he became the U.N. ambassador last month, didn’t comment directly on Ahmad’s offer. But it clearly didn’t go as far as the United States and other Security Council members want, which is an expanded and highly visible force on the ground monitoring government, rebel and militia activity.

The United Nations says Darfur has become the scene of the world’s worst humanitarian crisis since African rebels rose against the government in February 2003, claiming discrimination in the distribution of scarce resources.

International rights groups have accused the Sudanese government of arming Arab militias known as the Janjaweed to crush the revolt—an accusation it denies, although last week it acknowledged it has “control” over some fighters.

A resolution adopted by the U.N. Security Council on July 30 gave the government 30 days to demonstrate that it was taking action to rein in the Janjaweed and improve security and humanitarian access. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is expected to deliver a written report on Sudan’s compliance by Aug. 30 and the top U.N. envoy to Sudan, Jan Pronk, will deliver his assessment to the council on Sept. 2.

In an interim assessment Tuesday, Assistant Secretary-General Tuliameni Kalomoh told the council that the United Nations continues to receive reports of attacks by the Janjaweed and of looting and harassment by men in uniform.

But he said the government has improved humanitarian access and was cooperating in setting up safe havens for the displaced, council diplomats said.

Sudan closes its embassy in Washington

KHARTOUM, Sudan (AP)—Sudan said Wednesday it had closed its embassy in Washington after being unable to find a bank that would handle its financial matters.

The Foreign Ministry said the bank that had handled the embassy’s transfers from Khartoum for more than 30 years had closed Sudan’s account, along with other embassy accounts, in July “because of difficulties it encountered.”

The ministry statement did not name the bank. The embassy has been the scene of daily demonstrations for several weeks in protest of Sudan’s treatment of people in the western Darfur region.

The ministry said it asked the U.S. State Department for assistance but “it failed to convince that bank or find another bank.” A senior State Department official said on condition of anonymity that efforts were being

made to find another bank.

The ministry ordered the embassy to close this week because it cannot pay its employees or its utility or other bills.

The statement blamed the United States, saying it was the responsibility of the host country to facilitate the mission of embassies. It said if the situation was not resolved after an unspecified period of time, Sudan would “be obliged to take specific measures as necessary.”

Science & Technology

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Life & Style

A gentle touch with kids

By DAFFODIL J. ALTAN

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Massage therapist Shay Beider's clients are usually attached to gawky high-tech machines, intravenous tubes or seated in wheelchairs.

Today, her 4 p.m. appointment is with David Johnson. The 5-year-old, who grabs at the netting around his bed and grunts softly, is relearning how to talk and walk after a hit-and-run accident in April left him in a coma.

Beider rubs scented almond oil into her hands and closes her eyes. As David reaches for a yellow plastic toy box, Beider adjusts her arm underneath his small back and leans in at an angle so she doesn't disturb his movements.

"It doesn't look like a spa massage," Beider says. "The essence is compassion."

Indeed, massage has a different face when it comes to some of L.A.'s sickest children.

Most kids will spend about a month in Childrens Hospital Los Angeles' rehabilitation "dome," a medley of rooms huddled around a small, indoor courtyard with giant skylights. They come here to recover from a variety of afflictions—accidents, severe burns, multiple strokes. Johnson was hit by a car while he was crossing the street.

Many of the children are experiencing severe pain for the first time in their lives and are on heavy doses of medication. For nearly a year, however, they've had another option for pain relief: massage therapy.

Childrens Hospital Los Angeles is the first medical center in the state to offer free massage therapy to young patients. (The hospital refers to it as "compassionate touch.") Beider and the other therapists work for the Heart Touch Project, a nonprofit group in Santa Monica that was founded to provide free therapeutic massage for HIV patients.

Although several California hospitals



LOS ANGELES TIMES

Shay Beider massages the back of David Johnson, 5, of Palmdale, Calif., hospitalized in April after being struck by an automobile.

use some form of massage, most refer patients to outside therapists. The patients usually pay themselves, because massage is generally not covered by health insurers. Nationally, 90 percent of hospitals in a recent survey reported that patients pay out of pocket for massage.

During the last decade, massage therapy has gained growing acceptance at U.S. hospitals as research has shown that therapeutic touch can not only ease pain, but also induce weight gain, alleviate depression and boost the immune system.

"It's only recently that scientific studies have been conducted to document and indeed show that touch has important implications for improving health and well-being," says Maria Hernandez-Reif, co-director of the Touch Research Institutes at the Uni-

versity of Miami School of Medicine.

Dozens of studies by the Touch Research Institutes have found that massage can enhance growth of premature infants, diminish pain for fibromyalgia patients and decrease glucose levels in diabetics, among other findings.

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, a branch of the National Institutes of Health, is sponsoring several studies on the effects of massage on adults and children.

Dr. Michael Joseph, associate director of the Comfort and Pain Management Program at Childrens, says the hospital's plan is to bring massage therapy to any patient who might benefit. "We have much bigger goals," Joseph says.

Four years ago, Beider was planning to attend medical school and

was shadowing a Childrens Hospital surgeon. She remembers how terrified a little girl looked in the operating room before surgery. "There are so many procedures that are painful," says Beider, who thought that a pre-surgery massage might have calmed the girl. "To have a basic, human, deep, gentle touch can have a real impact."

Children who endure long hospital stays become anxious about having their bodies touched because they associate it with the pain of needles and surgery, Beider says. She started lobbying for a children's massage program after her experience with the young girl.

"Our goal was really to integrate a more Eastern-thinking intervention into a more Western-thinking institution," says Jeffrey Gold, a

clinical psychologist at Childrens.

There was some initial resistance to the idea, Joseph acknowledges. "There were things that were said like, 'There's never going to be a massage therapist that touches my patient,'" he says. "Basically we had to write a policy that made the institution comfortable." And the challenges didn't stop there. "It took months and months just to figure out what oil we were going to use for the infant massage," Joseph says.

The hospital has been cautious in other ways. The volunteer therapists must undergo an FBI background check and gain approval from several hospital committees before working with children. After therapists receive hospital privileges, doctors can request that they work with their patients.

The massage therapists receive additional training at Heart Touch to prepare them for working with the children and their families.

On a recent Thursday, massage therapist Amanda Hussein walks in to see Jesse Sanchez. The 10-year-old has chubby hands and smooth cheeks. His mother, Josefina, who speaks little English, explains that he has had multiple strokes.

"When he saw Amanda coming he said, 'Ay, now I can sleep for a good four hours,'" she says.

Hussein asks him what's been bothering him and then goes to work, kneading her fingers carefully between his knuckles, underneath his back. By the time she reaches his feet, he is snoring quietly.

"He never sleeps like this," his mother says.

Childrens Hospital sees some of L.A.'s most complex cases, and 80 percent of its patients are on government health insurance programs. Often, the child's hospitalization is the family's biggest crisis, and that creates a challenging situation for the therapist.

"Every time, it's like starting over," Hussein says.

Music piracy lawsuits wend through courts

By TED BRIDIS

AP TECHNOLOGY WRITER

WASHINGTON (AP)—A woman in Milwaukee and her ex-boyfriend are under orders to pay thousands to the recording industry. A man in California refinanced his home to pay an \$11,000 settlement. A year after it began, the industry's legal campaign against Internet music piracy is inching through the federal courts, producing some unexpected twists.

"I'm giving up and can't fight this," said Ross Plank, 36, of Playa Del Ray, Calif. He had professed his innocence but surrendered after lawyers found on his computer traces of hundreds of songs that had been deleted one day after he was sued.

Plank, recently married, refinanced his home for the money.

"Apparently, they would be able to garnishe my earnings for the rest of my life," Plank said. "For the amount I'm settling, this made sense. I didn't

see any other way. They've got all the power in the world."

The campaign has also produced worries, even from one federal judge, that wealthy record companies could trample some of the 3,935 people across the country who have been sued since the first such cases were filed in September 2003.

"I've never had a situation like this before, where there are powerful plaintiffs and powerful lawyers on one side and then a whole slew of ordinary folks on the other side," said U.S. District Judge Nancy Gertner at a hearing in Boston. Dozens of such lawsuits have been filed in her court.

On the West Coast, another judge rejected an injunction sought by record companies against one Internet user, saying it would violate her rights.

So far, however, record companies are largely winning their cases, according to a review by The Associated Press of hundreds of lawsuits. They did lose a major ruling this week when a U.S. appeals court in California said manu-

facturers of software that can be used to download music illegally aren't liable, leaving record labels to pursue lawsuits against Internet users.

James McDonough of Hingham, Mass., said being sued was "very vexing, very frustrating and quite frankly very intimidating." He told Gertner, the Boston judge, that his 14-year-old twins might be responsible for the "heinous crime" of downloading music "in the privacy in our family room with their friends."

Gertner has a teenage daughter and said she was familiar with software for downloading music. She blocked movement on all the Massachusetts cases for months, "to make sure that no one, frankly, is being ground up."

Gertner started ruling on cases again this month, when she threw out counterclaims accusing record companies of trespass and privacy invasions for searching the online music collections of Internet users.

At least 807 Internet users have already settled their cases by pay-

ing roughly \$3,000 each in fines and promising to delete their illegal song collections, according to the Recording Industry Association of America, the trade group for the largest labels.

Experts said the amounts of those settlements—compared to \$7,500 or more for losing in court—discourage people from mounting a defense that could resolve important questions about copyrights and the industry's methods for tracing illegal downloads.

"When you're being sued for a relatively small amount of money, it doesn't make sense to hire the specialized entertainment or copyright counsel," Gertner said at a hearing this summer.

In Milwaukee, Suheidy Roman, 25, said she couldn't afford a lawyer when her ex-boyfriend, Gary Kilps, told record companies that both of them had downloaded music on Roman's computer. Although she denies the accusation, Roman ignored legal papers sent to her home. A U.S. judge earlier this year granted a default judgment

against her and Kilps, ordering each to pay more than \$4,500.

Industry lawyers said they have won an estimated 60 such default judgments nationwide.

"I've got brothers and sisters and family who come here and use my computer all the time," Roman told the AP. "But as far as downloading or distributing music, I don't do that. ... I don't have any money for an attorney, let alone for any judgment against me." She said she is unemployed with two small children.

Roman said that since she was sued, she hasn't talked to Kilps. He doesn't have a telephone listing and didn't return calls from AP to his relatives.

Lawyers said they traced to Roman and Kilps an Internet account distributing songs by UB40, Tu Pac, Destiny's Child and Air Supply. They said the illicit music collection also was associated with an account under the name "Flaka," which Roman acknowledges is her nickname. She told AP she deleted all the files on her computer, not just any songs.

Al Franken urging GOP protests

NEW YORK (AP)—Al Franken wants you to get up out of your chairs, open your windows, stick your heads out and yell ... fuggedaboutit? Well, yes.

In the spirit of Paddy Chayefsky's classic movie monologue from "Network," the liberal comedian on Wednesday urged New Yorkers—and other Americans—to simultaneously scream the all-purpose local wise-crack at the moment that President Bush accepts the nomination.

"This is a form of protest that is very non-disruptive," Franken said at a press conference in the Park Avenue office of Air America radio network, where he hosts a talk show.

Franken said the Sept. 2 protest, called the "Great American Shout-Out," will not "tax our public safety system at all."

"This is our way of venting," Franken added. "It will be a catharsis."

Franken said he expected the shouts to last less than five minutes. Out of "respect for the office of the

presidency," he asked that participants quiet down once Bush begins speaking so "people can hear him give a bad speech."

Franken said he expects 100 million people nationwide to participate, adding: "Anything less would be a horrific failure."

Unlike the movie version—"I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!"—this protest has been tailor-made for regional dialects, Franken said.

In his native Minnesota, people are to yell "Oh no ya don't!" in an exaggerated accent.

In California, the suggested shout is: "No way, dude!"

Air America has created a Web site, www.thegreatamericanshoutout.org, where participants can plan "shout parties" or let their solo shout be counted.

Air America began on five stations around the country on March 31 as a left-leaning political alternative to conservative talk radio. It now airs on 23 stations nationwide.

Celebrities plan response to Republican convention

By VERENA DOBNIK

AP WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Thousands of people waving pink slips will line Broadway for three miles, their jobless-in-America protest stretching from the site of the Republican National Convention to Wall Street.

Near the Brooklyn Bridge, a mammoth red megaphone will amplify election-year opinions from a variety of people 24 hours a day.

While the Republicans meet at Madison Square Garden, America's biggest city will offer edgy spectacles in its streets, squares, parks and stages, featuring such people as Lauren Bacall, Robert Altman, Margaret Cho, Spike Lee, John Sayles, Marisa Tomei and Slick Rick.

On Saturday—two days before the GOP convention starts—the Imagine Festival of Arts, Issues and Ideas comes alive with about 200 performances that organizers call a "response" to official party politics. The lively lineup has no official link to either party, but serves largely as counterprogramming to the convention nominating President Bush for a second term.

"We're raising the level of public discourse above the soundbites of the politicians," said Chris Wangro, an executive producer of the festival that ends Sept. 2, along with the convention.

"We believe the political parties are dividing people to get votes, whether they're Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals or whatever," said Wangro. "This is an opportunity for people to speak out on human issues—on jobs, health care, freedom of expression."

Venues throughout New York's five boroughs will host actors, musicians, painters, scientists, photographers, comedians, writers, poets, filmmakers, spiritual leaders—and just ordinary citizens.

There'll be singing, dancing, joking and even just standing and waving symbolic pink slips—for The Unemployment Line.

"The Bush team has done a terrible job with unemployment, and in New

York, it's 30 percent higher than the national average," said Robert Lah, a 31-year-old Wall Street lawyer with a six-figure salary who was a registered Republican until four months ago, when he became a Democrat.

On Sept. 1 just after 8 a.m., Lah will join about 5,000 people filling Broadway sidewalks from 31st Street near the Garden to Wall Street. They'll raise the pink slips above their heads for 15 silent minutes, giving protesters with jobs time to get to work.

People for the American Way, a Washington-based organization running The Line, will make room for anyone who just shows up for the silent protest.

At least a third of the festival events are free, and tickets to the rest cost an average of \$15.

On opening night, Korean-American comedian Margaret Cho is kicking off her "State of Emergency World Tour" at Harlem's Apollo Theater, delivering what she calls "a raw interpretation of what's happening daily in our ever-evolving or devolving state of the union."

The show has an extra, offstage bite to it: Cho's controversial, off-color lines were "banned" in Boston by hosts of a nightclub show linked to the Democratic convention who canceled her appearance.

"Bring It On!"—Democrat presidential nominee John Kerry's slogan—is the title of a show satirizing the Republicans in sketches and songs by writers including E.L. Doctorow, Calvin Trillin and Mary Gordon. It'll be presented on Sept. 2, the night of Bush's nomination speech, at Symphony Space on Broadway—along with a live broadcast of the convention.

"The Republicans wouldn't be in New York if it weren't for 9/11," said Trillin. "So for the convention, they'll try to turn a few acres of lower Manhattan—ground zero—into their New York."

The giant megaphone—the Freedom of Expression National Monument—will carry people's voices toward ground zero from Foley Square, a walk from the Brooklyn Bridge.

Expectations soar for Malaysian epic film

By SEAN YOUNG

AP WRITER

KUALALUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—For weeks, the nationwide frenzy of anticipation for "Princess of Mount Ledang"—Malaysia's most expensive movie ever—has been inescapable.

Mammoth street billboards proclaim the coming of this Malay-language epic based on centuries-old local folklore about a beautiful princess who spurns the love of a tyrannical sultan. The theme song reigns on radio charts. Newspaper columnists speculate that the picture could be the first from this Southeast Asian country to win widespread foreign acclaim.

"Is Malaysia capable of creating a film to match worldwide standards? This movie proves it," says Gil Rossellini, a New York-based film distribution executive who helped the movie secure its international premiere at next month's Venice Film Festival.

Rossellini expects global audiences to relish a rare glimpse at the pre-colonial era monarchies of Southeast Asia in a movie he says reminds him of historical dramas made by his adopted father, Roberto Rossellini, the legendary director who pioneered Italy's school of neorealist cinema decades ago.

By Hollywood's standards, the \$4 million spent to recreate 15th century Malay village life and palace intrigue

might seem minuscule. But it's 10 times the budget of most movies in a nation where scarcely two dozen local films play each year and American blockbusters rule the multiplexes.

The enterprise—produced by Malaysian entertainment company Enfiniti and helmed by Saw Teong Hin, a local music video veteran who is making his feature film directorial debut—carries more than the whiff of a prestige piece.

It opens nationwide on Tuesday, when Malaysia celebrates the 47th anniversary of its independence from Britain. It's the first big-screen period drama about the Malay sultanate since the 1960s. And it tells a story that's beloved by many Malaysians.

"I wanted to be part of this movie so much because we all grew up with this tale, which was told to us by our grandparents and taught to us in school," says Tiara Jacquelina, a Malaysian actress who takes on the title role of a princess who is betrothed to the cruel ruler of a maritime empire but loves one of his bodyguards instead.

The movie is certain to spark a box-office stampede for people who are fatigued with the Malaysian film industry's typical output of adolescent comedies and horror knockoffs—though critical response remains in doubt.

"Princess of Mount Ledang" is easy on the eyes, showing off colorful,

splendidly outfitted characters amid sweeping vistas of misty mountaintops, white coastlines and gnarled forests.

But it's saddled with a script that gives those characters little to do but make grave observations about how chickens cannot outrun foxes and people should be careful while crossing oceans, because the waters might somehow transform into flames. From the start, the movie trades narrative urgency for deadly solemnness and perpetual philosophizing.

Jacquelina and M. Nasir, who plays her warrior lover, have charisma to spare, but their romance never ignites, partly since they have less than a half-hour of screen time together in a 155-minute movie. Jacquelina's character seems content to stare at sunsets and take long, solitary baths near a waterfall, while Nasir is elsewhere, wrestling with existential angst.

Nevertheless, the filmmakers have high hopes for the movie's rollout scheduled for Sept. 5 in Venice, where it will be in competition for movies from new directors. After that, "Princess of Mount Ledang" will probably be shown at other film festivals while awaiting a possible distribution deal in the United States and Europe.

"It's not easy to get attention in this big world, but we hope people will embrace this movie, because it showcases our country's culture and heritage," said producer Shazalli Ramly.

Zhang Ziyi to star in 'Geisha' movie

LOS ANGELES (AP)—After long years of development and some tricky Hollywood dealmaking, a movie version of the best-selling novel "Memoirs of a Geisha" is headed into production.

The book became a sensation around the world when it was first published in 1997. The story chronicles a young girl's rise from poverty in a Japanese fishing village to life in high society.

The lead role of Sayuri will go to Zhang Ziyi, the Chinese actress who starred in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" and appeared in the comedy "Rush Hour 2," her publicist said Thursday.

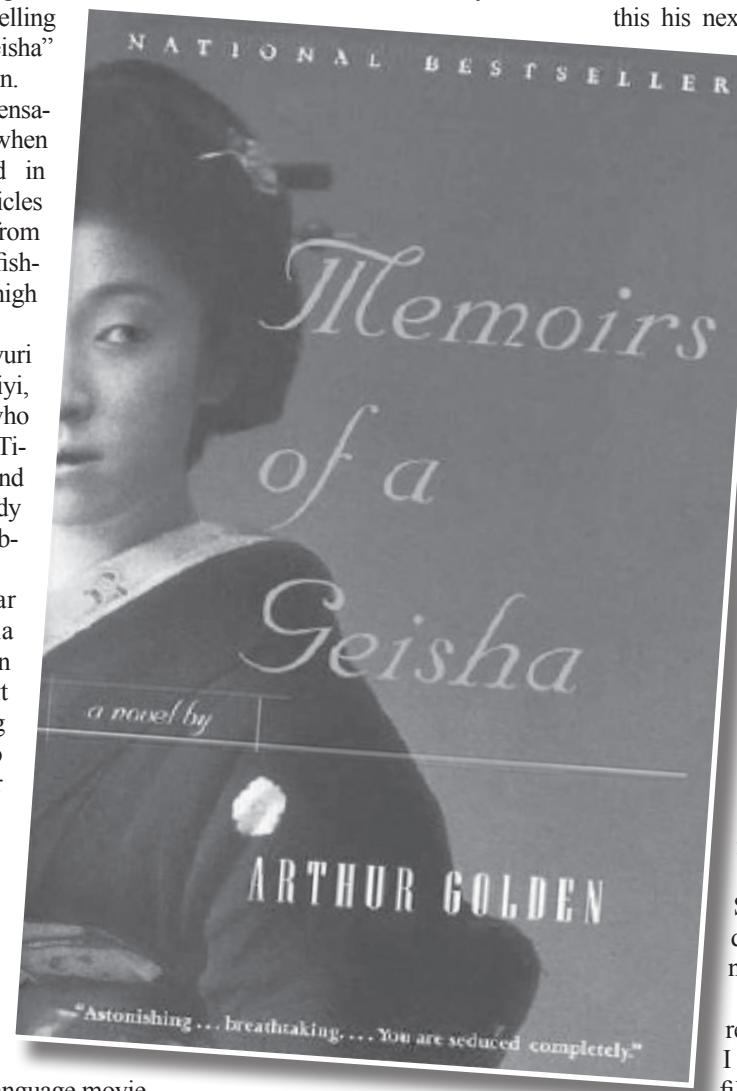
For those unfamiliar with the story, a geisha is a Japanese woman schooled in the art of dance, singing and conversation to be a companion for wealthy men.

Zhang, 25, has been working to perfect her English for several years and now speaks the language with little difficulty.

"This is the first time that I will play the lead in an English-language movie. It will be a big challenge, but the studios, producers and director have shown great confidence in me. I will continue to do my utmost to make this the best role I've ever played," she told The Associated Press.

Ken Watanabe, an Oscar nominee

for "The Last Samurai," will portray the Chairman, a high-powered executive with whom Sayuri falls



in love.

Another "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" co-star, Michelle Yeoh, has signed to portray Mameha, the elegant and experienced geisha who becomes Sayuri's mentor.

"Geisha" will be directed by Rob

Marshall, the Oscar-nominated director of "Chicago."

Marshall has long wanted to make this his next project, but was locked into a contract with Miramax Films, while Columbia Pictures and DreamWorks SKG held the rights to "Geisha." After lengthy negotiations that threatened to block his participation, a deal was eventually reached among the studios.

"We could not be more excited about the extraordinary cast that we have in place for 'Memoirs of a Geisha,'" said Marshall, who's also a Tony-winning director and choreographer. "We are adapting a beloved piece of literature that has become a worldwide sensation, which made it important to me to assemble a cast with a prestigious international profile."

For many years, Steven Spielberg was interested in directing the film. He will now serve as a producer.

"From the time I first read Arthur Golden's novel, I wanted to see this as a film," Spielberg said. "It's a uniquely compelling story rich with characters who take you into a world you have never experienced before."

Production is set to begin in the fall, but the release date has not yet been specified.

Raising the temperature with *Fahrenheit 9/11*

Fahrenheit 9/11, Michael Moore's diatribe against the president who thinks "nuclear" is pronounced "new-cue-ler," had a difficult time making it to theaters in America, and never made it to Saipan. Near the eve of the movie's national release, Disney blocked its subsidiary, Miramax, from distributing it. Eventually, Moore was able to buy out of the contract with Miramax and found distribution with Lions Gate. Ironically, Disney's attempt to block the release of the film may have ended up helping it gain a much larger audience than it would have otherwise, sans controversy. Since its June 5th release date, *Fahrenheit 9/11* has demolished, with shock and awe, box office records for documentaries, grossing over \$115 million, domestically. The previous record-holder was Moore's own *Bowling for Columbine*, with \$21 million.

The unabashedly liberal Moore clearly has an agenda with *Fahrenheit 9/11*. It can't be coincidence that it was released in the thick of the race for the presidential election. Moreover, it will be available on DVD, Oct. 5th, one month before a bunch of corn-farmers and denture-flappers decide the fate of our nation, and thus the entire world. Just as Christians gushed about how important a film *Passion of the Christ* was, in that it might revitalize faith in God, Democrats are equally enamored by *Fahrenheit 9/11*. It is possible that this film might eventually gather enough undecided voters to swing the election in Kerry's favor, making it the most influential movie ever made.

Curious and impatient minds on Saipan don't have to wait until Oct. 5th to see it, however. As long as you don't mind using means that are somewhat (er...how should I phrase it?) untraditional, the most talked-about movie of the year is at your fingertips. Actually, it's a whole lot easier than you probably think—drop me an email (joewatchesmovies@yahoo.com) and I'll gladly point you in the right direction. You could be watching it tonight.

Whether you end up loving or hating *Fahrenheit 9/11* is largely

"The unabashedly liberal Moore clearly has an agenda with *Fahrenheit 9/11*. It can't be coincidence that it was released in the thick of the race for the presidential election."



By JOE WEINDL
Special to the
Saipan Tribune

dependent on your political affiliation. One can safely predict their reaction to the movie, based on whether the state they are from is usually blue or red on election-day. I'm from Seattle, WA, the Evergreen State that is predictably blue every fourth November. So, of course I think the movie is the greatest thing to come along since Meitetsu Mart started making croissants with hot dogs in them. They're so buttery-delicious! Those of you who might be a bit more conservative, please allow me an attempt to open your mind to how we think over on the left.

A common criticism is that *Fahrenheit 9/11* is all just Moore's opinion. Not true. Moore did his research, and he used very reputable sources. Actually, the facts he presents us with are nothing new. Other people have already presented them, but have gained much less attention. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is overflowing with Moore's political opinions, mind you, but they're all backed up with plain and simple facts.

Let me give you an example. Fact: Unocal has wanted to build a pipeline through Afghanistan since Bush was governor of Texas. Halliburton has been contracted to build the pipeline. Dick Cheney used to be the head of Halliburton, and is still on

their payroll. Enron would also benefit from the pipeline. Ken Lay, CEO of Enron, is Bush's largest financial contributor. Hamid Karzai and Zalmay Khalilzad, the president and envoy, respectively, installed by the Bush administration in Afghanistan, are both former advisors for Unocal. Opinion: The war in Afghanistan had absolutely nothing to do with al-Qaida, and everything to do with money. While you don't have to agree with the opinion, the facts are indisputable.

The criticism heard most often of *Fahrenheit 9/11* is that it's extremely one-sided. Yeah, it is. So what? Who says a documentary is supposed to present all the sides of an argument? Besides, there are plenty of people, yours truly included, who would argue that objectivity is a fallacy. Just take a look at how our national media has treated the last two presidents. Bill Clinton was subjected to intense scrutiny for infractions as trivial as spending too much money on bad haircuts, and having fun with cigars, while George W. Bush has enjoyed freedom from any real exposés for violations of a much more serious nature. It's worth noting that the people who criticize *Fahrenheit 9/11* for being one-sided are the same people who think Fox News is "fair and balanced."

Since I am a film critic, I suppose I'm obliged to at least briefly set politics aside, and just comment on the merits of *Fahrenheit 9/11* as a movie. It's not perfect (occasional boredom being my only criticism), but overall, it gets a gigantic thumbs-up. Besides being able to make a very convincing argument, Moore plays with our emotions, like a puppeteer tugs at Pinocchio's strings. Dangling between heart-wrenching tragedy and Moore's trademark sarcastic humor, *Fahrenheit 9/11* is unconditionally engrossing. Regardless of which side of the aisle you dwell on, this one is well worth watching, if for nothing else than the entertainment it provides, and the lively debates it can ignite.

Comments? Email Weindl at joewatchesmovies@yahoo.com.

Movies to watch with your children

By JOHN FARR

Special to the Stamford Advocate

We may take our kids to concerts to expose them to great music, museums to give them a sense of history, and galleries to show them great art. What about film?

Given the prominence of filmed entertainment in our kids' lives, we should focus just as much, if not more, on giving our children a solid foundation in film literacy. If all they seem to like are Vin Diesel and Adam Sandler, or if they categorically refuse to watch any movie in black and white, it could be time for some corrective action. Watching selected classics with them should build an initial awareness and appreciation that, over time, will allow them to enjoy and embrace the best of cinema.

On first viewing some of these movies will go over better than others. Those less successful are still worthwhile purely for exposure value, planting a seed that may sprout later. Those immediately embraced can be built upon with other movies of the same ilk. So, if your daughter loves *Gigi*, get her the *King and I*; if your son adores *The Guns of Navarone*, set him down in front of *Where Eagles Dare*. Try not to think of this process as work, and your kids won't either. Sometimes just telling your little ones how much a given title meant to you when you first saw it will pique their curiosity. It also helps to set some basic context: that old movies tend to be slower, more language-driven than today's fare, closer to watching a play. Finally, convey the important idea that what we watch today is a direct result of what we used to watch. Example: without a Steve McQueen, there would be no Brad Pitt. In other words, history is important...and revealing.

Here are some timeless movie classics to watch with your kids.

For the smaller fry

Along with the best of the more recent Pixar and Disney fare (*Toy Story*—1 and 2, *Finding Nemo*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*) sprinkle in the older Disney animated classics: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, *Pinocchio*, *Dumbo*, and *Fantasia*, as well as *Lady and the Tramp* and the original *101 Dalmatians*. These films offer wonderful stories and characters, as well as hand-drawn animation that puts digital technology to shame.

Young kids have always adored two Julie Andrews musicals as well: *Mary Poppins* (1964, Disney) and *The Sound Of Music* (1965, Fox Home Entertainment). Both films are colorful, with fabulous scores,

and both feature the governess every child would wish for.

For solid live-action entries, there's Laurel and Hardy's delightful fantasy *March of the Wooden Soldiers* (1934, Koch Vision Entertainment). For a more recent title, try *The Little Vampire* (2000, New Line Home Entertainment). It's cute and charming, with lots of heart, as a friendship between a boy and a young vampire causes some benign complications.

Evergreen musicals

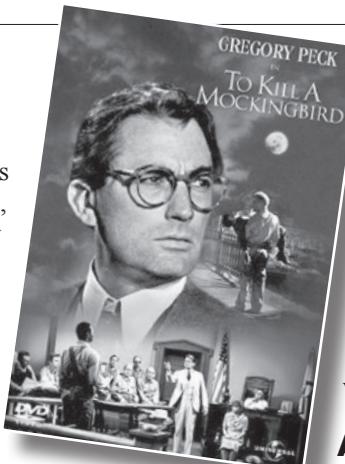
Musicals are great exposure for kids because they tend to be fairly wholesome, and because they're in short supply among current releases. Topping the list is *Singin' in the Rain* (1952, Warner Home Video), which will resound with kids 10 and older. It's not only tuneful, but very funny. Another winner is *West Side Story* (1961, MGM), unique for its grittiness in re-telling one of mankind's most famous romances. Beyond those unforgettable songs, the choreography still mesmerizes. Finally, introduce your kids to the *Beatles with A Hard Day's Night* (1964, Miramax Entertainment). The film is still fresh, exuberant and infectious. So's the music.

Child-accessible comedy

Again, the trick here is maintaining a degree of wholesomeness before exposing the next generation to the best of Woody Allen, Mel Brooks and the Zucker/Abrahams team. Go with classics—the Marx Brothers' *Duck Soup* (1933), *Horse Feathers* (1932, both Image Entertainment) or soon-to-be-released-on-DVD, *A Night at the Opera* (1935). I'd also introduce them to Chaplin via *Modern Times* (1936, Warner Home Video). Another sure-fire hit is *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* (1948, Universal Studios), the perfect mix of chills and chuckles. Also, Danny Kaye's best film, *The Court Jester* (1956, Paramount Studios), is lively and often hilarious. Finally, for color, comedy and thrills, try *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965, Fox Home Entertainment), chronicling an air race from the early 20th century. All those early model planes in flight will delight the children, and Terry-Thomas, Robert Morley and Stuart Whitman provide plenty of additional entertainment on the ground.

Drama for the ages

Every child older than 10 should see *To Kill A Mockingbird* (1962, Universal Studios), a movie told from a child's point-of-view that relates important lessons about race and tolerance. The same holds true for Sidney Lumet's *Twelve Angry Men* (1957, MGM/UA Video), a searing film about justice and the courage to stand alone. The outstanding *Sounder* (1972,



UAV Corporation) traces the experience of growing up in a sharecropper's family in the Depression-era South. And don't forget *It's A Wonderful Life* (1947, Republic Studios). Though for adults it may seem like an over-hyped holiday movie, every kid should see this tale about the dangers of wishing your life away.

Adventure!

Several rousing classics should command attention: *The Adventures Of Robin Hood* (1938, Warner Home Video), with Errol Flynn (in dazzling early Technicolor); *The Crimson Pirate* (1952, Warner Home Video), starring a young Burt Lancaster; and *Scaramouche* (1952, Warner Home Video), with Stewart Granger.

Hitchcock's *North By Northwest* (1959, Warner Home Video) is also aces for older children, the perfect introduction to the master of screen suspense.

On the fantasy front, you will not improve on *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940, MGM) and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* (1958, Columbia/Tristar Studios). The effects alone are worth the price of admission.

Top picks by gender

For boys, there are the best war and western pictures, namely: *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957, Columbia/Tristar Studios), *The Guns of Navarone* (1961, Columbia/Tristar Studios), *The Great Escape* (1963, MGM/UA Studios), *Shane* (1953, Paramount Home Video) and *High Noon* (1952, Lionsgate/Fox).

For girls, I nominate four films with particularly strong central heroines: *National Velvet* (1945, Warner Studios), starring a young Elizabeth Taylor; *The Red Shoes* (1948, Criterion Collection)—likely the best film on dance ever made; *Gigi* (1958, Warner Studios), about one girl's sublime transformation into womanhood; and finally, Billy Wilder's *Roman Holiday* (1953, Paramount Home Video), featuring Audrey Hepburn's glorious debut as an adventurous princess.



And...how could I forget? Oh, yes. Then, of course, there's the best children's movie ever: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, Warner Studios). But you already knew that.

Hawaiian musician takes ukulele to stardom

TOKYO (AP)—Jake Shimabukuro is perched on the verge of stardom. He still does the little clubs, but he can also fill arenas, pulling in thousands of raptured admirers. And he's a darling of the critics, who have compared him to such guitar greats as Jimi Hendrix and Eddie Van Halen. Not bad, considering Shimabukuro plays the ukulele.

"I've always thought the ukulele was an untapped source of musical potential," the 27-year-old from Honolulu said in an interview recently after wrapping up his third Japan tour. "I want to expose more and more people to the ukulele in this new fashion, changing people's perspective of the instrument. Or just opening up their minds to the new possibilities of it."

Though his repertoire includes a healthy dose of Hawaiian folk songs and light beach music, he also does classical, rock and blues. He performs solo for the more serious, classical pieces. In a group, he plugs in his ukulele and goes nuts, playing it with his teeth a la Hendrix or using a pedal board to create electric-guitarlike effects.

Such virtuosity is quite a feat, since the ukulele has only four strings and a frustratingly narrow range.

"Definitely, the ukulele is limited in a lot of ways. That's what makes it difficult and chal-



AP
Jake Shimabukuro performs at a Tokyo music store, Aug. 9, 2004.

lenging," he said. "With a guitar, or any other string instrument, you have so much more range. Basically, you're working with only two octaves, which makes it very challenging when you're

attacking classical pieces."

Shimabukuro's own exposure to the ukulele—which made its way to the island state about a century ago from Portugal—is very Hawaiian.

His mother got him playing it—or playing with it—when he was 4. After a few years, he was strumming for his immediate family, then for larger family gatherings, then weddings, then for whoever happened to be at Honolulu's now defunct Java Java Cafe.

"It was a coffee shop about five minutes from my house," he said. "So I could walk there."

Three years ago, however, he decided to take his career up a notch. By 2002, he had become the first Hawaiian—and only ukulele player—to sign with Epic Records.

Shimabukuro, a fourth-generation Japanese-American, has since built a solid following in Japan, which has long had a love affair with virtually all things Hawaiian. Last year, he performed at the Fuji Rock concert, one of the biggest summer music extravaganzas in Japan, and did a joint performance with the popular band Tube that drew a crowd of 35,000.

"It was just a sea of people," he said. "Amazing."

His most recent Japanese tour took him through nine cities this summer, mostly for shows in small to medium-sized venues. As usual, the critics were left gushing.

"He has fingers faster than the best rock guitarists," the Yomiuri newspaper said in a

glowing review. "If he plays country, his ukulele transforms into a banjo."

Still, Shimabukuro has had a hard time hitting the big time. His biggest audience outside of Hawaii or Japan to date was about 10,000 at a festival in Colorado.

"I don't want to say people are closed-minded, because that's not quite it," he said. "They have an image about the ukulele, an idea about it, and it's hard to convince them to come to the shows. But once they do, and they see it, they appreciate it. To me, that's an indication we are moving in the right direction."

Shimabukuro isn't bent on jettisoning the ukulele's playful connotations.

"A lot of people think of

the ukulele as a toy," he said. "I certainly do. When I'm on stage, I want people to see that it's fun to play. I'm having a ball, I hope they will too."

To win over more hearts and minds, Shimabukuro will be touring the States over the next several months, playing at venues ranging from the Bumbershoot arts festival in Seattle to the Knitting Factory in Hollywood. His newest CD, "Walking Down Rainhill," also was released in the United States on Tuesday.

But he says he isn't in any particular hurry to become a household name.

"Doing music is like anything else, it takes time," he said. "What I like isn't being there, it's trying to get there."

MTV bars Beenie man as gays plan protest

MIAMI (AP)—Dancehall star Beenie Man, who has recorded anti-gay songs in the past, was yanked from a concert associated with the MTV Video Music Awards this weekend after gay groups planned a protest, the network said Wednesday.

MTV pulled the Jamaican singer from the roster Tuesday after South Florida gay activists announced plans to protest Saturday's concert in Miami over some of his past lyrics, including "I'm dreaming of a new Jamaica, come to execute all the gays" and "Queers must be killed."

"We don't want anything to overshadow what will be a great weekend of music events for South Floridians," MTV



Beenie Man

spokeswoman Marnie Black said Wednesday. She declined further comment.

The awards show is Sunday at the bay-front AmericanAirlines Arena in Miami, the first time in the glam-filled event's 21-year history that it will take place outside New York and Los Angeles.

Beenie Man has had his concerts canceled in Europe over the last few weeks after angry gay groups protested. Although he has previously defended his lyrics, earlier this month, Beenie Man issued an apology for his previous songs, including "Bad Man Chi Chi Man

(Bad Man, Queer Man).

"Certain lyrics and recordings I have made in the past may have caused distress and outrage among people whose identities and lifestyles are different from my own. ... I offer my sincerest apologies to those who might have been offended, threatened or hurt by my songs."

Other stars of dancehall, a sensuous, more contemporary form of reggae, have also recorded anti-gay songs and have been targeted by gay groups because of their lyrics, including Buju Banton.

Beenie Man's manager,

Clyde McKenzie, said "in many instances the lyrics of dancehall artists are metaphorical."

"He has made it clear that he doesn't want to incite violence," he said of Beenie Man.

He said he understood MTV's actions.

"If their organization is being pressured they may not want anything to be distracting from their event," he said.

Heddy Pena, executive director of the Miami-based gay-rights group SAVE Dade, said: "We respectfully suggest that he use other metaphors." Her group had been organizing the protest.

"It's disappointing to see artists use their talents as a tool for hatred and bigotry," she said.

wallace

Rapper Ma\$e making a musical resurrection

NEW YORK (AP)—Five years after he stunned the hip-hop world by giving up a multiplatinum career for a religious career, Pastor Mason Betha is still talking about a resurrection—this time, a music one.

A huge hip-hop star known to the world as Ma\$e, Betha all but declared his alter ego dead when he traded in his hedonistic rap life in 1999.

He went to school, became a minister, married, got his own church and disavowed his former life, complaining that the rap world he once belonged to

was corrupting the youth with sexual and violent lyrics.

Yet today, he has returned to the hip-hop community that he only recently had held in disdain. He's recorded a new album, titled "Welcome Back," reunited with former mentor P. Diddy and his Bad Boy record label, and has even collaborated with some of today's more raucous rappers on their hits—though all his raps are now squeaky clean.

His sudden comeback seems as inexplicable as his now-ended retirement, an incongruous step in a life that had been

steeped in the word of God. But ask Ma\$e if he's veered away from God's path, and he simply smiles and explains that it's all part of the same plan.

"I'm already in my field. This is just another part of my entrepreneurship," he says in his typical slow drawl, sitting in the offices of his record label, wearing a lime-green striped shirt with matching multicolored jewels draped his neck and wrist. "I've got a purpose for being here this time. I've got a reason behind my voice now."

In Betha's view, he didn't

have any reason behind his voice when he gave it all up at age 20. A charismatic figure with a baby face and dimples, he had become a rap superstar with his laid back rhymes and party lyrics that referred to sex, drugs and more sex, and sold about 4 million albums with just two albums—1997's "Harlem World" and the 1999's "Double Up." His voice was on hit after hit, from his own ("Feels So Good") to the numerous verses he dropped on other people's songs as a coveted guest (Mariah Carey's "Honey" and the Notorious B.I.G.'s "Mo Money, Mo Problems").

Longtime client wants to pull the plug on hairdresser's tv

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: "Mr. Eugene" has been my hairdresser for nearly 20 years. We have seen each other through divorces, deaths, recovery from alcoholism (me), and life struggles in general. Mr. Eugene used to be a great hairdresser. The problem began when he installed a little television set at his station. He keeps it on all the time and watches it almost constantly. He watches it while cutting my hair, pausing every so often to pay closer attention to what's on TV.

The quality of my haircuts has started to decline, and along with it, our client/hairdresser relationship. I'm about ready to change hairdressers because I can't find the nerve to reach over and turn the darn thing off or tell him how annoying it is, and how much better a hairdresser he is when he pays full attention to what he's doing.

Please print this so Mr. Eugene will read it and give his clients the attention we deserve.

SPINELESS IN LEXINGTON, KY.

DEAR SPINELESS: Mr. Eugene is only a hairdresser. He is not a mind reader. Since you haven't voiced an objection to his cutting and styling your hair with one eye on the boob-tube, how can he be expected to know you have a problem with it?

Try this: Rather than criticize him, tell him that you would prefer that he leave the TV set off while working on you, because you miss the quality time you used to spend together. You might be surprised to find that he takes it as a compliment.

DEAR ABBY: I became engaged last Christmas. I have been planning my wedding with the help of my mother and my fiance's mother. I love them both, and they are helping to pay for my big day.

My problem is that every time I disagree with them, they call me "Bridezilla." I don't think I'm too demanding or hard to please. I just have ideas, tastes and expectations that may be different from my two mothers'.

This horrible stereotype is ruining the planning. I become devastated when they refer to me in that way, and end up giving in so I don't seem to be unreasonable.

Please help me. I am ending up with a wedding that isn't what I want. What should I do?

NOT BRIDEZILLA IN L.A.

DEAR NOT BRIDEZILLA: It is wrong of your mother and your fiance's mother to call you names. However, since they are helping to fund the wedding, you can't blame them for wanting a meaningful voice in the planning. If you feel your dream wedding has been hijacked, then you should politely draw the line and finance it yourself.

DEAR ABBY: I am in a live-in relationship with a man I'll call Howard. Last year, I began quietly seeing "Adam." Howard found out about the affair a few months later, but didn't want us to break up.

I decided to stay with Howard even though I am in love with Adam, because I can't support myself on my own. After that, Adam decided it would be best if we stopped seeing each other. I know he's right, but I'd really like to talk to him. Right now, I'm agonizing over whether to call him.

When I ask my family or friends for advice, they say I should move on and get over Adam, because I'm only 21 and have my whole life ahead of me. The truth is, I can't let go so easily. It has been about four months since we last spoke. Should I call Adam, and if I do, what should I say?

CLUELESS IN VEGAS

DEAR CLUELESS: Listen to your family and friends; they have your best interests at heart. In the meantime, I strongly recommend that you take a breather before going another round with anyone. Do not call Adam until you have left Howard and become self-supporting. That way, he will know you are not after him for a meal ticket, too.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For an excellent guide to becoming a better conversationalist and a more attractive person, order "How to Be Popular." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby Popularity Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Charges possible for Dave Matthews band

CHICAGO (AP)—Authorities were considering criminal charges Wednesday against the Dave Matthews Band and one of its tour bus drivers for allegedly dumping human waste from a bus into the Chicago River, dousing a tour boat filled with passengers.

The announcement came a day after the state sued the band and driver Stefan Wohl, accusing them of violating state water

pollution and public nuisance laws. The lawsuit seeks \$70,000 in civil penalties.

Chicago police said surveillance footage from nearby buildings shows a bus crossing the grated bridge Aug. 8 as the tour boat passed underneath.

"Certainly, this is the bus that discharged this fluid," Cmdr. Michael Chasen said. He said the driver told police he crossed the bridge around the time of the

incident but didn't admit dumping the waste.

More than 100 people on an architecture tour were showered with foul-smelling waste. The attorney general's office said no one was seriously injured.

The band was waiting to see the video surveillance footage and other evidence before making a judgment, Dave Matthews Band spokesman

John Vlautin said Wednesday.

Police were working with the attorney general's office to determine if any charges should be filed.

Howard Learner, the executive director of the Chicago-based Environmental Law and Policy Center, said criminal charges could include violations of public nuisance laws and ordinances to protect public and health safety.

'Apprentice' runner-up works \$3.8B deal

NEW YORK (AP)—Kwame Jackson is starting to look less like an "Apprentice" and more like Donald Trump.

The runner-up in the first season of the NBC reality show "The Apprentice" has completed a multibillion dollar real-estate deal of his own. With two other

partners, Jackson has made a deal with officials in Prince George's County in Maryland to develop 550 acres into commercial and residential property.

The deal is worth \$3.8 billion and will provide over 32,000 jobs, Jackson said.

"For me, 'The Apprentice'

was the beginning," he told The Associated Press Tuesday. "It's not a ceiling, it's a floor."

In developing one of the nation's more affluent black counties, "We believe in being catalysts in what we call the second generation of the civil rights movement," Jackson said.

His company, Legacy Development Partners, will announce the specifics of the real estate deal at a news conference Wednesday. It also plans production of an executive menswear line and a network TV show.

"The Apprentice," and Trump, return to NBC on Sept. 9.



Heche

Anne Heche to join cast of 'Everwood'

NEW YORK (AP)—Anne Heche will join the cast of "Everwood," the WB drama about a Manhattan brain surgeon who relocates in a Colorado mountain town.

The actress, who has starred in the movies "Wag the Dog" and "Six Days, Seven Nights," will play the role of Amanda

Carver, the Patron Saint of the town of Everwood, the WB announced. The show's main character, played by Treat Williams, becomes involved with Heche's character while helping her cope with her husband's paralysis.

Also joining the third season of "Everwood," which premieres 9 p.m. EDT Sept. 13,

will be Scott Wolf, best known for his role on "Party of Five."

"Anne Heche is a phenomenal actress and, along with the addition of Scott Wolf, brings a great new sense of excitement to what is already an outstanding show," said David Janollari, the WB's president of entertainment.

'Naked' said unsuitable for GOP delegates

NEW YORK (AP)—The Statue of Liberty. Bloomingdale's. The Brooklyn Botanical Gardens. A stage full of naked guys singing. Oops! The city's tourist bureau has pulled an off-Broadway show called "Naked Boys Singing" from a list of discounted offerings to visiting Republican delegates, after the Republican National Committee complained it wasn't suitable.

The gay-themed show, billed as a musical revue that "celebrates the splendors of male nudity in comedy, song and dance," has received generally good reviews and hasn't created much of a stir since it began its run six years ago. Its 2,127 performances make it the 10th longest-running off-Broadway show.

So, when NYC & Company placed the production among the theater offerings for its "Come Early, Stay Late" program designed to get delegates to spend an extra couple of days in the city, nobody thought much about it.

But this month, when members of the RNC's Committee on Arrangements began to review the list of offerings, the show's title caught their eye, and they asked that it be removed from the tourist bureau's Web site.

"The Republican Party selected what we felt were offers that would best suit our audience," RNC spokesman Leonard Alcivar said Wednesday. "We thank the producers for offering their generous discount, and wish them continued success with the show."

Cristyne Nicholas, president and CEO of NYC & Company,



Stage manager Bernie Fernstenberg, right, gets help from his box office manager, Chris Goodrich, as they move a sign advertising the musical comedy "Naked Boys Singing," outside Theater Four, Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2004, in New York.

took the blame, saying, "the offers came in so quickly—faster than we could originally handle."

The show's producer, Carl White, said the RNC's decision to drop the show runs counter to the reasons Republicans chose New York to host the convention in the first place.

"It's very disappointing to

us," said White. "They say they picked us because of our equality, our diversity, our culture."

In fact, before the show was removed from the site, about a dozen people—presumably delegates—had purchased tickets using the special code offered on the Web site. Those tickets will be honored.

Mother and daughter indicted for TV fraud

PITTSBURGH (AP)—A mother and daughter were indicted on mail fraud charges for allegedly swindling a Pittsburgh TV station by doctoring winning sweepstakes entry forms.

Sonya Rosenberger bilked Pittsburgh station WTAE-TV out of \$95,500 by using her computer to make bogus entry forms for the station's "Watch 4 Win More" contest after winning contest numbers were broadcast, according to Tuesday's indictment.

Rosenberger, 27, created the bogus winning forms for herself, her friends and relatives from April 2002 until May, when station officials discovered the scam, authorities said. Rosenberger did not return a telephone message left at her home Tuesday evening.

Also charged in the scam was Rosenberger's mother, Alanna Ridenour, 45, who allegedly used the bogus winning forms to get about \$12,000 from the station.

It was unclear if either woman had a lawyer.

"I applaud station employees for detecting suspicious activities and bringing them to the attention of the authorities. The station will continue to cooperate with the investigation and subsequent prosecution of this case," said WTAE-TV President and General Manager Rick Henry.



Winning gambler is peeved when her date wants half

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: If a gentleman asks a lady to accompany him to a casino and gives her money to gamble, is it proper for him to insist that she split her winnings with him? This happened to me recently.

Even before the \$1,000 credits were finished rolling, my date called out that it was a 50/50 split. Most of my friends felt it was highly inappropriate, and that I should have been entitled to my entire jackpot.

I would have preferred being given the chance to make up my own mind about whether I wished to share my winnings. My friends also pointed out that this man makes four times the money I do and should have been more generous.

Do you think my friends were right? At first I was just a little bit irritated. Now I feel taken advantage of.

SHORTCHANGED IN SACRAMENTO

DEAR SHORTCHANGED: Considering the fact that your date advanced the money that brought your windfall, I'd say you are 100 percent ahead of where you would be had he not been so generous. You may feel offended at his sense of entitlement, but a lady would have offered to share.

□ □ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: I am a 33-year-old woman who has never been married. My boyfriend, "Mickey," recently proposed and I accepted. We're planning a small wedding in about four months. It's a first marriage for both of us.

I have two small dogs whom I adore. Their names are Melody and Harmony. Mickey insists that I get rid of one of them and that I am immature for wanting to keep both.

I explained that Melody and Harmony were around before he was, and I can't give up either one. He knew about them before we began dating.

They are not outdoor pets. I keep them very clean and do not see what the problem is. Melody and Harmony both have been through basic dog training and are well-behaved.

I am disturbed that, knowing how much I care for them, he would ask such a thing. We seem unable to reach an agreement about this. I love Mickey dearly and know he loves me, too. How can we resolve this?

BROKENHEARTED IN PEORIA, ARIZ.

DEAR BROKENHEARTED: What your fiance is suggesting is a very poor start for a marriage. If you cave in to these demands, you will never forgive yourself—and it will only be the beginning of what he will want you to sacrifice. My advice to you is to postpone the wedding until your fiance can find enough love in his heart for the three of you, because you are a package deal.

□ □ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: Please tell people that when shaking hands, not to "squeeze" a person's hand hard. I have arthritis in my hands and it hurts so bad when some people shake my hand. Just a gentle shake is sufficient. Please print this.

SORE HAND IN PILGRIM, KY.

DEAR SORE: A person can shake your hand only if you extend it. The next time you're in a social situation and someone extends his or her hand—smile, reach out and touch the person on the upper arm and say, "I'd shake your hand, but I can't because I have arthritis."

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Good advice for everyone—teens to seniors—is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby



Pastimes



Woods' top ranking on line at NEC Invitational

By DOUG FERGUSON

AP GOLF WRITER

AKRON, Ohio (AP)—Tiger Woods already lost out on the majors. Next up could be his No. 1 ranking.

The top candidate is Vijay Singh, who showed up at Firestone just 18 hours after winning the PGA Championship acting as if nothing had changed and he was ready to play the next tournament.

"You see some guys win and they have a little lull for a week, or they don't commit to the next week, or it's tiring for them to win," PGA Tour commissioner Tim Finchem said. "I saw him (Monday), and he's just ... he's just Vijay."

The next time Finchem sees him, he might be looking at the No. 1 player in the world.

Singh's playoff victory at Whistling Straits brought the 41-year-old Fijian to the brink of a goal not many thought possible two years ago.

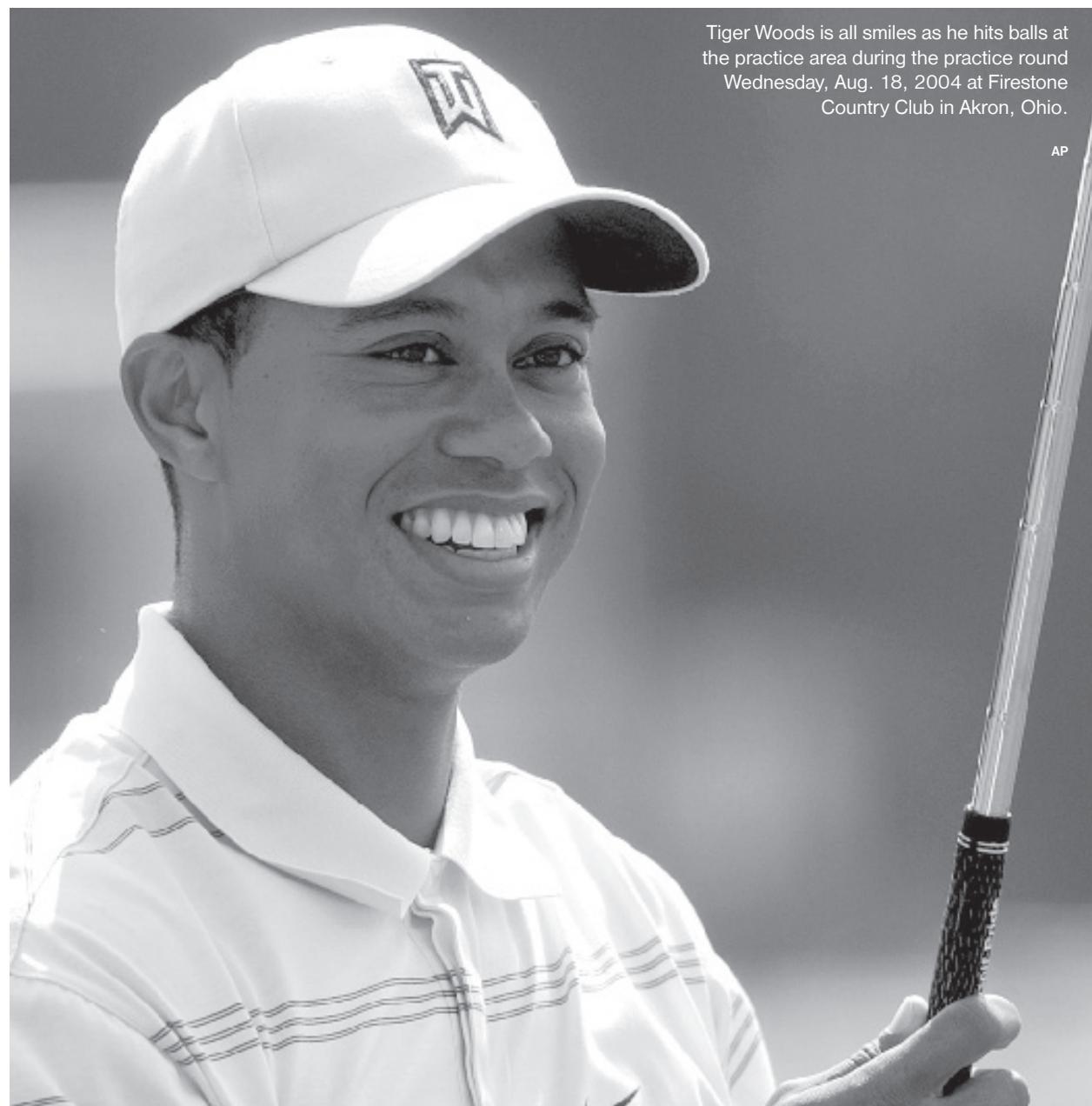
Having closed the gap to a mere one-tenth of a point, Singh needs only to finish ahead of Woods at the NEC Invitational to end Woods' record reign of 262 consecutive weeks atop the world ranking.

"I want to finish No. 1, and if I can do that, that would be great," Singh said. "That will be the ultimate goal for me - to win a major, win the money list and player of the year, and at the same time be No. 1 in the world. I'm very close, but my focus this week is this tournament.

"If I can pull this one off, then I'll probably take the rest of the year off."

Singh laughed, although everyone already knew he was kidding.

He loves to play tournament golf, so much that he thinks the world ranking system works against him. Singh already has won five times this year, compared with one victory for Woods. A year ago, Singh was a four-time winner and narrowly lost the PGA Tour



Tiger Woods is all smiles as he hits balls at the practice area during the practice round Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2004 at Firestone Country Club in Akron, Ohio.

AP

player of the year award to Woods and his five victories.

What counts is consistency, which is why Singh is so close to the top.

That is how Woods has stayed there for so long - a record 332 weeks since turning pro eight years ago, breaking the record Monday that Greg Norman (331

weeks) had set over a 12-year span.

Woods has been No. 1 for the last 262 weeks, dating to his victory in the 1999 PGA Championship.

And he is well aware that it could be gone over the course of four rounds on a Firestone South course that is playing longer and tougher than ever.

"As far as the No. 1 ranking, it's certainly a point of honor," Woods said Wednesday. "You've had to play hard and you've had to play well, and for me to have done it for as long as Greg has, I've been very consistent."

But it's not just consistency. Winning is a large part of the No.

Ravens leave door open for Deion to play

By DAVID GINSBURG

AP SPORTS WRITER



WESTMINSTER, Md. (AP)—The Baltimore Ravens are excited about the prospect of having Deion Sanders come out of retirement and be a part of their defensive backfield.

The question now is: Will he take them up on their offer?

The Ravens have told Sanders that if he wants to end his retirement of three years, he would be welcome to join the team. Sanders is working out at his Dallas home in an effort to determine if his 37-year-old body can take the punishment of playing in the NFL.

"He's obviously doing his due diligence to see if this is something he really wants to do," Ravens coach Brian Billick said Wednesday. "Certainly we'd love to have him in, and when we get to that point, he'll be in."

Ravens safety Corey Fuller, a good friend of Sanders, isn't so sure that Sanders is ready to put on a helmet and shoulder pads for the first time since 2000, when he was a member of the Washington Redskins. Sanders formally announced his retirement the day before the Redskins opened camp in 2001.

"I talk to him every day," Fuller said. "I know what he's going to do. The man said he's not coming. He's got four kids. It's not because he can't play anymore. It's just that the man has a lot going on outside of football."

But the Ravens are convinced that Sanders has yet to arrive at a final decision, and they're prepared to let him take his time in deciding if he wants to join the team.

"It's far enough along that when he feels he's ready, he's in," Billick said. "Deion is a professional. He doesn't want to come in here unless he's ready to go. We'll give him that kind of space, and when he feels he's physically at the right spot, then we'd love to have him."

Sanders made a name for himself at cornerback, a far more demanding position than where the Ravens would use him - as a fifth defensive back in passing situations. Therefore, Billick isn't worried about the possibility of Sanders perhaps being a step slower than when he was known as Prime Time.

"He's a special individual with special talents. He's not too old, I can promise you that," Billick said. "It will be a work in progress to a degree, but he's not too old. He's been out of it for

three years, which means he's fresh."

On that point, Fuller concurred.

"Deion is in great shape. He has a gym in his house and works out all the time. But when you get older, it comes down to your mind," Fuller said. "When you've been off for three years, you get attached to other things."

Sanders, a former major league outfielder, worked out with the Texas Rangers prior to Wednesday night's game against the Cleveland Indians. He shagged flies in the outfield and took swings in the batting cage.

As he left the field, Sanders was evasive when asked about returning to the NFL.

"I'm here to talk about baseball," Sanders said. "Baseball questions only. I really miss baseball. I didn't know how much I missed it, being around the guys."

If Sanders wants to play for the Ravens, defensive coordinator Mike Nolan would happily draw up a game plan that would include him in the backfield.

"Adding depth is one thing, but adding quality depth is a whole different thing," Nolan said. "A player like that comes along, we'll do what fits that player. It will allow us to be more aggressive than we already are."

A player like that allows you to do just about anything."

Most of the Ravens are excited about the possibility, too.

"Deion brings excitement to the game," linebacker Adalius Thomas said. "I used to watch him as a kid, and now you get a chance to sit down with him and pick his brain. It will be very exciting when he does, uh, if he does come back."

Ravens wide receiver Kevin Johnson is excited about the prospect of running in practice against cornerback Chris McAlister, who is expected to arrive in camp next week, and Sanders, one of the finest defensive backs of the past 20 years.

"You figure, with him, Chris and Gary Baxter, you're going to get the best of both worlds," Johnson said. "You're going up against Chris, who's the best of his time right now, and Deion, one of the best of his time."

But the addition of Sanders could spell trouble for a player such as rookie cornerback Lance Frazier, who's striving to be part of the team.

"That would be another roster spot, right at the position that I'm playing," Frazier said. "That will get me either booted or put on practice squad."

1 ranking, which is why Woods is on the verge of losing it. His only victory this year was the Match Play Championship in February, and with only five tournaments left on his schedule, he most likely will end his streak of five consecutive years with at least five victories.

"Greg was No. 1 in the world for a long period of time and he was winning two to four a year, and I did the same thing," Woods said. "I did five-plus for five straight years, and now Vijay has won five times this year. That's how you do it. You don't get to No. 1 in the world by finishing top 10. You have to win."

And that's why Woods is holding out hope that No. 1 still belongs to him until someone takes it away.

His game has not been sharp all year, although Woods can't argue with the venue.

Firestone South has been one of his favorite tracks since he turned pro, never finishing lower than fifth in his six appearances and winning the NEC Invitational three straight times (1999-2001) in a variety of ways - by one shot, by 12 shots and in a seven-hole playoff against Jim Furyk for his only victory in the summer of '01.

"I think any time you come to an event where you've won before and you've had success, you automatically feel comfortable and confident, if your game is not up to form or if you're playing great," Woods said. "I've come in both ways into this tournament, and for some reason I've played well."

The NEC Invitational is for players on the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup teams, the top 50 in the world ranking and winners of top tournaments around the world.

Knicks re-sign forward Baker

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Knicks re-signed forward Vin Baker on Wednesday.

The 11-year veteran averaged 9.8 points and 5.2 rebounds in 54 games for the Knicks and Boston Celtics last season. He signed as a free agent in March, averaging 6.6 points and 4.1 rebounds in the final 17 games for the Knicks.

"Vin gave us a solid presence off the bench at the end of last season and in the playoffs," Knicks President Isiah Thomas said. "With a fresh start at training camp with the team, we know he'll be an even more productive force."

The 6-foot-11 Baker averaged 14.3 minutes in four playoff games, contributing 5.5 points and 3.0 rebounds in the Knicks' first-round loss to the New Jersey Nets.

Baker was the eighth overall pick by the Milwaukee Bucks in the 1993 draft and a four-time All-Star, but his battle with alcoholism led to his release by Boston.

Baker was shooting more than 50 percent for the Celtics before he was suspended—and subsequently had his contract terminated—for violating terms of his alcohol treatment program.

Woods aims to regain form at British Open

By TIM DAHLBERG
AP SPORTS COLUMNIST

TROON, Scotland (AP)—Tiger Woods has been hitting fairways this week, and his caddie, Steve Williams, hasn't been hitting anyone.

The British Open doesn't start until Thursday, of course, and things can change just as quickly as the quirky weather off the coast of west Scotland. Woods doesn't need to be reminded of that.

The last time the British Open was held in Scotland, he was not only an overwhelming favorite, but British bookies also fancied him to finish off the Grand Slam that year.

Incredibly, just two years later, he's not even the pick to win this week at Royal Troon. That honor would go to Ernie Els, who just a short time ago seemed baffled by the idea he could actually beat Woods when it really mattered.

Now, it seems, anyone—and that really means anyone—can beat Woods. Eight players have won major championships since he took the U.S. Open at Bethpage, N.Y., in 2002.

With each wayward drive, Woods sinks a little bit more toward mediocrity. The mystique is gone, and so is the intimidation other players used to feel every time he stuck a tee in the ground.

"Pure and simple, he can't drive the ball in the fairway," Nick Price said. "From all I've seen now the last five months, his off-the-tee game is so erratic, and there's no pattern to it because he's losing it right and left. Until such time as he starts getting the ball in the fairway, he's going to struggle."

"You have to be a great driver of the ball to win major championships."

Indeed you do, and Woods once was. Which, of course, brings us to the question of what Woods has been doing to become that great driver again.

Well, he's got a new driver for one, a big fat graphite shafted Nike that's just the type he once



Tiger Woods is seen during practice for the British Open at Royal Troon golf course in Troon, Scotland Wednesday July 14, 2004. The British Open is scheduled to start on Thursday July 15.

AP

scorned. He's longer than ever, but length has never been a problem for Woods.

Presumably he's been out practicing with it, though you might wonder where he's getting the time. He's got a fiancee and an increasing number of business interests and recreational pursuits away from golf.

Some of those are in Las Vegas, where Butch Harmon, his former swing guru, teaches. Woods' visits, though, have nothing to do with getting instruction from his estranged coach.

Last month he jetted there for a few days of gambling after finishing well off the pace at the U.S. Open. And just hours after he finished his final round at the Western Open near Chicago, he was spotted partying at a posh casino nightclub.

Coincidence? Maybe.

Woods, like anyone else, has the right to blow off steam. He's certainly earned it after bearing the many responsibilities that came with being Tiger Woods over the last few years.

But Woods became great because of his singular focus on his golf game, as his father, Earl Woods, would be more than willing

to tell you. He became great by constant hours of practicing to come up with a short game as great as the shots he could seemingly manufacture at will off the tee.

Whether the same focus is still there is hard to figure out. Woods doesn't let anyone inside his private life, and he's not about to tell anyone what he's doing.

But if last month's U.S. Open is any indication, there are cracks in the armor. At Shinnecock Hills, Woods feuded publicly with Harmon even while his drives were going sideways, and he wasn't a factor on the weekend.

At the same time, his caddie became so annoyed at a photographer that he kicked his camera, then later went into the crowd and grabbed another one from an astonished spectator.

The boss doesn't like distractions, you know.

"I've always played my best when I've gone out and played—and stayed—focused on what I have to do and not worry about anything else," Woods said Tuesday.

Woods didn't say much else. He's become more taciturn than ever, insisting as always that everything is fine, while at the

same time refusing to be drawn into any specifics about his game or his swing.

Harmon speculated at the U.S. Open that his former student was in a "bit of denial" about everything, a statement that angered Woods mostly because it was made publicly.

Since then, Woods and Harmon have chatted and Woods said they patched up some of their differences. None of that chat concerned his golf swing, though, and Woods still stubbornly clings to the notion he can fix things himself.

Maybe he can. Maybe Woods knows something no one else knows and will find a way to do something he hasn't done since last October—win a stroke-play tournament.

Winning, of course, is the best way to quiet critics. If Woods can win his second British Open, people will quickly quit talking about his slump and return to talking about his chances of beating Jack Nicklaus' record of 18 major championships.

And maybe his caddie will get a clue and quit bullying people on his way around the course.

Armstrong, UConn pair win ESPY Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong was a repeat winner as male athlete of the year, and Connecticut basketball stars Diana Taurasi and Emeka Okafor were also honored Wednesday night at the 12th annual ESPY Awards.

Armstrong is currently attempting to win the Tour de France for the sixth straight time.

Taurasi won the best college female athlete for the second straight year as well as the best female athlete, while Okafor was chosen the best male college athlete. The two led their respective teams to NCAA championships last spring.

For the first time, fans determined the winners in all 36 categories, including the

19 cross-cutter honors that pit athletes from different sports against each other. More than 10 1/2 million votes were cast between June 21 and July 9.

Armstrong was honored as the best male athlete over home run king Barry Bonds, quarterbacks Tom Brady and Peyton Manning, and NBA star Kevin Garnett.

Taurasi was selected over golfer Annika Sorenstam and tennis star Justine Henin-Hardenne in the female athlete of the year category.

The Detroit Pistons, who beat the Los Angeles Lakers in last month's NBA Finals, were picked as the best team over the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, World Series-winning Florida Marlins, Stanley

Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning and the UConn men's and women's basketball teams.

Detroit's Larry Brown won the

best coach/manager award, and

the Pistons were the winners in

the new best upset category.

Among other winners were

Cleveland Cavaliers star LeB-

ron James, best breakthrough

athlete; Masters champion Phil

Mickelson, best male golfer and

top championship performance;

Manning, best NFL player; Gar-

nett, best NBA player; Lauren

Jackson, best WNBA player;

Antonio Tarver, best boxer;

Stewart Elliott, best jockey;

Andy Roddick, best male ten-

nis player; Gail Devers, female

track and field, and Serena Wil-

liams, best female tennis player.

The Ashe award is tradition-

ally given to an athlete whose

contributions transcend sports.

The ceremony was held at

the Kodak Theater and will be

televised Sunday by ESPN at

9 p.m. (EDT).

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

SPORTS TRANSACTIONS

MLB

HOUSTON ASTROS—Fired Jim Williams, manager; Burt Hooton, pitching coach; and Harry Spilman, hitting coach. Named Phil Garner manager, Jim Hickey pitching coach, and Gary Gaetti hitting coach.

NBA

ATLANTA HAWKS—Signed C Jason Collier.

BOSTON CELTICS—Re-signed C Mark Blount to a six-year contract.

CHARLOTTE BOBCATS—Signed G Jason Hart and F Tamar Slay.

DALLAS MAVERICKS—Re-signed G Marquis Daniels to a five-year contract with a team option.

DETROIT PISTONS—Signed F Antonio McDyess to a four-year contract with a team option and G-F Carlos Delfino to a three-year contract with a team option.

GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS—Re-signed C Adonal Foyle to a six-year contract.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS—Traded F-C Melvin Ely and G Eddie House to Charlotte for 2005 and 2006 second-round draft picks.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS—Traded C Shaquille O'Neal to Miami for F Lamar Odom, F Caron Butler, F-C Brian Grant and a future first-round draft pick.

MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES—Signed F Brian Cardinal to a six-year contract.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS—Signed C Etan Thomas to a six-year offer sheet.

PHILADELPHIA 76ERS—Signed F Brian Skinner to a multiyear contract.

PHOENIX SUNS—Signed G Quentin Richardson to a six-year offer sheet. Signed G Steve Nash to a six-year contract.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS—Re-signed F Bruce Bowen. Signed G Beno Udrih.

TORONTO RAPTORS—Signed G Rafer Alston to a five-year contract.

UTAH JAZZ—Signed F Carlos Boozer and C Mehmet Okur to six-year offer sheets. Re-signed G Carlos Arroyo to a four-year contract.

NFL

GREEN BAY PACKERS—Voided the trade of DE Jamal Reynolds to Indianapolis after Reynolds failed his physical and waived him.

NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS—Released S Jason Perry.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES—Signed G Adrien Clarke to a four-year contract and LB Jeremiah Trotter to a one-year contract.

Olympics

U.S. OLYMPIC MEN'S ROAD CYCLING TEAM—Announced Levi Leipheimer will replace Lance Armstrong.

College

AUBURN—Named Casey Dunn assistant baseball coach.

DARTMOUTH—Named Maribel Sanchez Souther women's cross country coach.

EVERGREEN STATE—Named Kim Farnsworth athletic trainer.

HOUSTON—Named John Severance women's tennis coach.

N.J. CITY—Named Bridgette Quijano softball coach.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE—Named Eric Viney women's assistant volleyball coach.

NORTHWESTERN—Announced men's junior basketball F Bernard Cote will transfer from Kentucky.

OKLAHOMA—Named Bill Pink director of women's basketball operations.

PALM BEACH ATLANTIC—Announced the resignation of Chris Bizo, men's and women's tennis coach, to take a position with Texas-Tyler.

RHODE ISLAND—Announced the resignation of Boe Pearman, women's basketball coach.

SANTA CLARA—Named M. Felipe Montoro assistant cross country coach and Steve Drake women's assistant basketball coach.

SETON HALL—Named Gerson Echeverry men's assistant soccer coach.

SKIDMORE—Named Darren Bennett women's basketball coach.

ST. FRANCIS, PA.—Named Wylie Crisanti women's lacrosse coach.

TULSA—Named Christy Connover softball coach.

WRIGHT STATE—Named Rob Cooper baseball coach.

By The Associated Press

LOCAL SCORES

RESTAURANT LEAGUE STANDINGS

Angel Wings	3	0
Country House	3	1
Jollibee	3	1
Capricciosa	2	1
Keeraku	1	2
LSG Sky Chefs	0	3
Ei Segundo	0	4

Prosecutor asks to retry Jayson Williams

FLEMINGTON, N.J. (AP)

The prosecutor in the Jayson Williams manslaughter case wants to retry the former NBA star in Hunterdon County.

In papers filed with the trial judge on Wednesday, First Assistant Hunterdon County Prosecutor Steven Lember argued that the retrial should be moved to Hunterdon County, where limousine driver Costas Christofi was killed by a blast from a shotgun handled by Williams.

"Just as the perceived existence of pretrial publicity led the court to change venue to Somerset County, the even-more extensive trial publicity in Somerset County necessitates a return to Hunterdon County," Lember wrote.

Superior Court Judge Edward Coleman moved the first trial to Somerset County because of extensive pretrial publicity.

Lember will ask Coleman to reconsider his decision not to allow testimony about Williams' prior gun use, including the alleged shooting of his dog.

gravated manslaughter, aggravated assault and possession of a weapon for an unlawful purpose, but was convicted on four counts related to his efforts to cover up the shooting.

The jury deadlocked on the remaining reckless manslaughter count and a mistrial was declared. Lember decided to retry the case on that one charge.

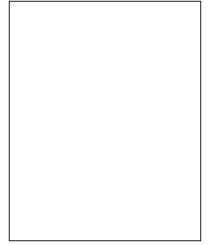
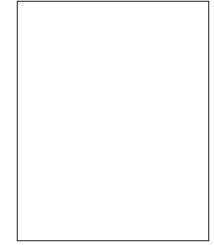
The retrial is scheduled to start Jan. 10 in Somerville.

Christofi died in 2002 in Williams' Alexandria Township mansion.

If the judge denies Lember's request for a change of venue, the prosecutor has asked that a jury be brought in from a neighboring county with demographics similar to Hunterdon.

Lember will ask Coleman to reconsider his decision not to allow testimony about Williams' prior gun use, including the alleged shooting of his dog.





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SAIPAN TRIBUNE
